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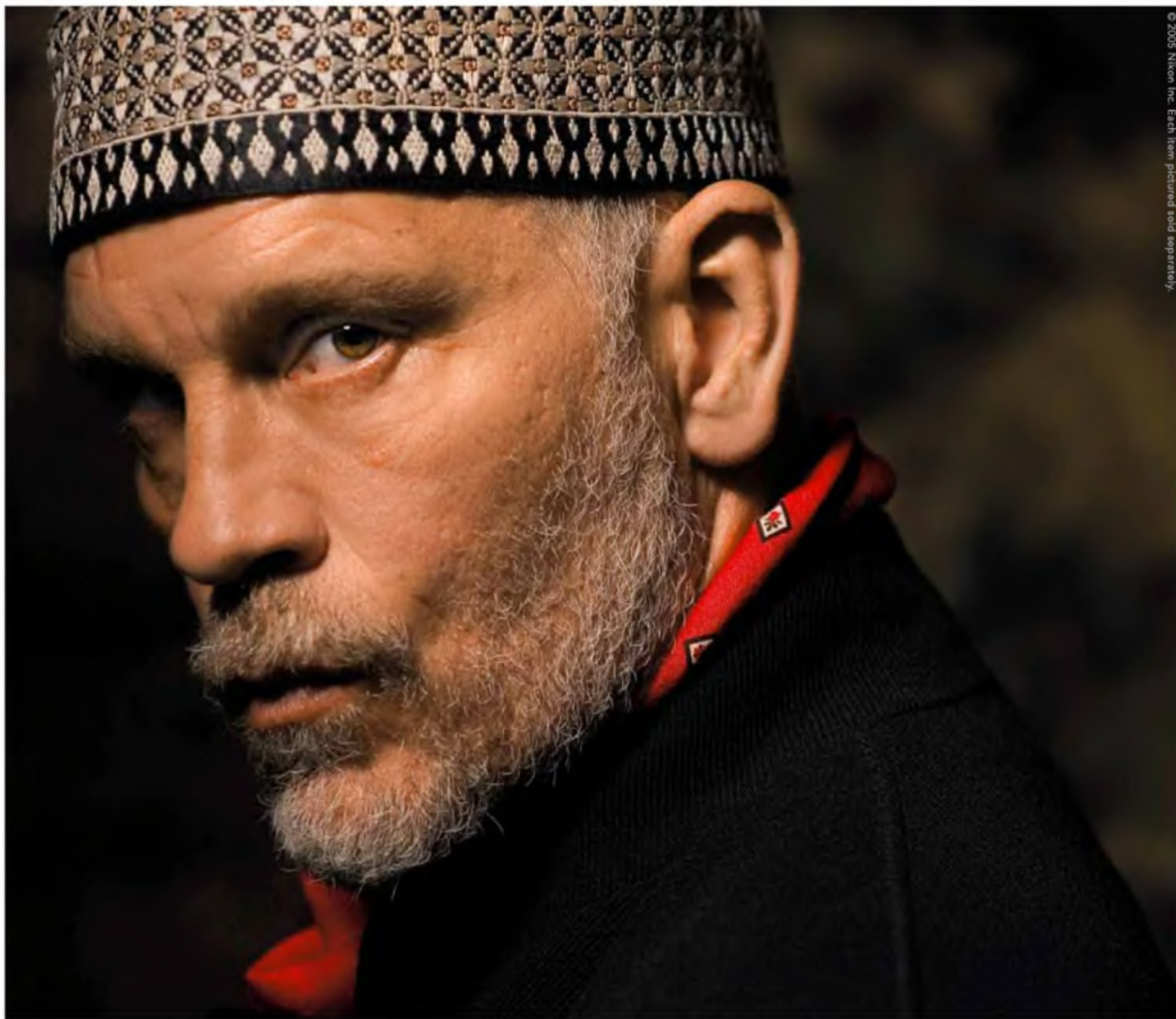
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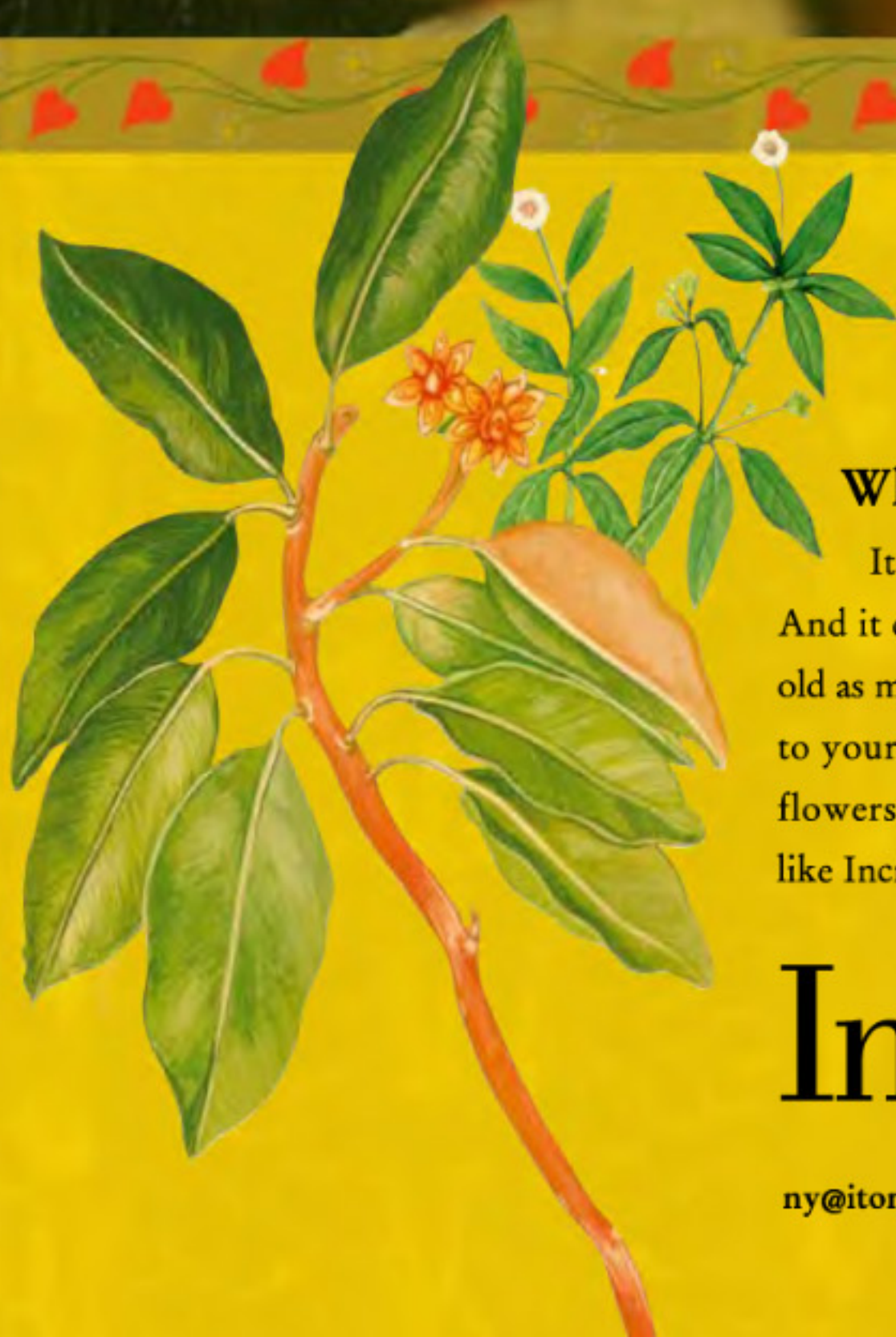
At the heart of the image™

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AMERICAN PHOTO

Volume XVII Number 4 July/August 2006

On the Covers:

This month subscribers get a classic image of Elton John by David LaChapelle; newsstand buyers get our three D-SLR cameras of the year, shot by Amos Chan.



© DAVID LACHAPPELLE



© AMOS CHAN

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How photojournalist Lester Sloan grew up in the shadow of the late, great Gordon Parks, whom he profiles in this issue.

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Gordon Parks was much more than a photographer, musician, poet, and film director. He was a symbol who became a cultural icon. Here, former *Newsweek* photographer Lester Sloan writes about the man who inspired him, and others, to take up photography and dream big dreams.

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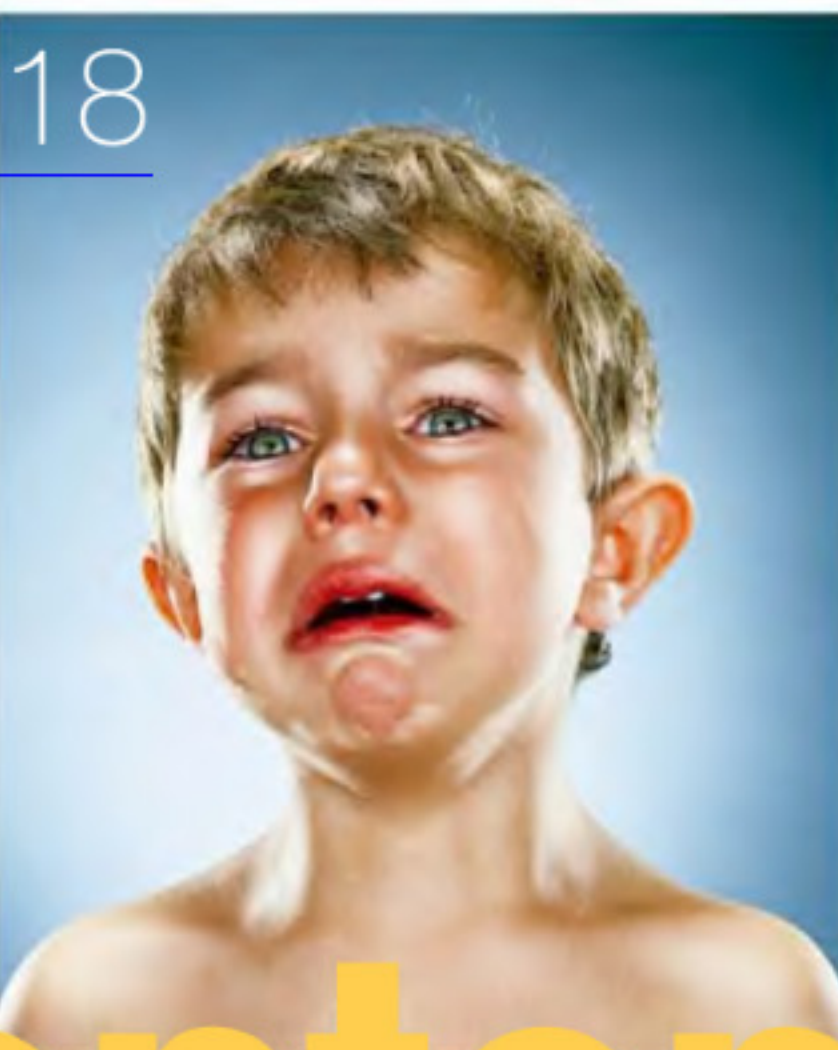
The biggest photography book of the year, so far, has to be David LaChapelle's new career retrospective, provocatively titled *Artists and Prostitutes*. Here's a sneak peek, plus an exclusive interview with one of the top photographers of our time.

departments

MARK EDWARD HARRIS



From left: Parks; a toddler by Greenberg; a shot by LaChapelle.



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The first time Lester Sloan met the late Gordon Parks, the two men fell into a private reverie that lasted five hours. "I was worried about taking up so much time of a man I admired so much," admits Sloan, "but that was just the way he was. He always had time to take a question." Sloan also recalls that Parks sent him away from that first visit with a warning: "He said, 'I'm usually up late—until two or three in the morning—so don't call me tomorrow until after noon.'"

Parks, the son of a dirt farmer from Ft. Scott, Kansas who went on to become a musician, photographer, movie director, and poet, died in March at age 93 after a long illness. His pioneering photographic and literary work about the African-American experience in America had turned him into a photographic icon and a revered cultural presence. He was the first black person to work at *Life* and *Vogue* magazines, and the first to write, direct, and score a Hollywood film. That film, *The Learning Tree* (1969), was based on an autobiographical novel Parks had written. He also directed

the hit 1971 movie *Shaft*, which opened the door for other black filmmakers.

It is difficult to judge the genius of such a man, particularly so for someone like Sloan, a former *Newsweek* photographer, who was inspired to pick up a camera by Parks, as many people were. Sloan himself grew up in Detroit and, as he says, "always wanted to experience a life that was unlike that of most of my friends—a life not defined by working on the assembly line at Chrysler or GM." He began his photography career by taking pictures of construction sites and selling them (with captions) to newspapers. He attended Wayne State University and became Detroit's first African-American television cameraman, leaving that line of work when he was denied a union card. Eventually he worked his way into a job at *Newsweek* covering the riots that rocked Detroit in 1967, and he continued to work at the magazine until 1996. Along the way he did a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, a portion of which was devoted to documenting the life of Gordon Parks.

Sloan met Parks while working on the book *Songs of My People*, to which Parks wrote an introduction. "By that time it was already late in his life, but I felt as though I'd known him forever," says Sloan. To this day, Sloan is struck by what he calls the "spirituality" of Parks. "When you hear about his life, you can't help but think that he was not only gifted but special—that he was destined to do the things he did," says Sloan. He recalls a two-tiered glass table in Parks's elegant New York City apartment, the bottom half of which held a watercolor by Parks, and the top half of which contained a still-life assemblage of eggshells and other bits of refuse the great man had rescued from the kitchen trash. "I always said there were only two beings who could make art out of garbage—God and Gordon," says Sloan.



Lester Sloan

LESTER SLOAN BELIEVES GORDON PARKS WAS DESTINED FOR GREATNESS.

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Podcast Interview With Jill Greenberg



American PHOTO has launched its first ever podcast with Los Angeles-based photographer Jill Greenberg, who discusses her latest body of work, "Lost Times," a portrait series of young children that studies as a political statement.

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Camera Test: Kodak EasyShare V570



Kodak's 3MP EasyShare V570 is the only digital compact on the market that sports two sensors, each with its own sensor. That's not just a gimmick to the falling price of imaging sensors, it's also a contribution that style and innovative design continue to be driving factors in the compact world.

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CHOOSING THE TOP GEAR

E D I T O R ' S N O T E



If you've bought a camera recently, you understand exactly how great the change in photographic technology has been in the past few years. And if you've been a regular reader of *American Photo's* Editor's Choice issue, you'll recognize the significant changes we've made to it this year.

This is our eighth annual Editor's Choice issue, so we've been doing it long enough to have tracked the decline of film photography and the rebirth of the medium with digital technologies. Back in 1999 we decided it was time to produce a buying guide to help our readers through the thicket of choices they faced when they shopped for photo gear; those choices increased at a bewildering rate as telephones became cameras and cameras themselves became loaded with increasingly sophisticated features, as software became a key to imaging, and as digital printers began producing images that rivaled old-fashioned C-prints in quality.

Those changes have dictated how we cover technology, and this year is no different. Perhaps the biggest story in photography recently has been the unprecedented popularity of digital SLRs, caused no doubt by the declining price of entry-level models and the number of new models that have become available, not just from traditional camera companies but also from consumer electronics companies. This year we reflect that trend with D-SLR categories for pros, advanced amateurs, and

beginners. There are categories as well for EVF cameras, which offer even more creative control and better image quality this year, and for compact cameras that combine breathtaking functionality with brilliant design.

From our "Cameras of the Year" to our picks of the best lenses, camera cellphones, software, and other essentials, our Editor's Choice testers this year were, well, choosier than ever. Executive editor Russell Hart and his team based their selections both on how products advanced the technology of photography and on how well they performed in the field. The result, we think, is a photo buying guide that is more meaningful and more influential than anything we've done in the past. Rest assured, our winning products are the state of the art in photography. We've even included an essay by industry expert Alexis Gerard to gauge what the future holds for photography. I promise: You'll be amazed.

A special issue about the best in photography seemed also to be an appropriate place to take stock of the late Gordon Parks. We asked noted photojournalist Lester Sloan to pay tribute to his friend and mentor, a groundbreaking African-American photographer, musician, poet, novelist, journalist, activist and film director (page 22). We also preview a huge new retrospective book from a modern master, David LaChapelle (page 32), who, like Parks, has redefined the idea of what a photographer can be.

David Schonauer, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Hot picks, from top left: The Pentax K100D entry-level D-SLR; the Kodak EasyShare V570 ultrathin compact; the Nokia N93 camera cellphone.

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INSIDE

PHOTOGRAPHY

Here is our Editor's Choice for the most controversial photo exhibition of the year: Jill Greenberg's "End Times" at Paul Kopeikin Gallery in Los Angeles. The show, extended through July 8, is made up of portraits of children crying and otherwise in distress. "I love the raw emotion of children, because it comes close to the anger and helplessness I feel about our current political and social situation," Greenberg comments. Others have responded considerably less benignly. "Jill Greenberg is a sick woman who should be arrested and charged with child abuse," reads the headline of an essay by blogger Thomas Hawk, the pen name of

a San Francisco-area "digital media and technology enthusiast."

"She is taking babies, toddlers under three years of age, stripping them of their clothes and then provoking them to various states of emotional distress, anger, rage, etc. [to] illustrate her personal beliefs," writes Hawk.

If one of the jobs of art is to provoke thought and emotion, Greenberg has certainly succeeded. What can't be denied is the raw power of the images, which are bright and saturated with color. Look at this image, titled "Useless." Is this art, or is it evil? To hear from Greenberg herself, see page 18.



From top left:
State fairs in North
Carolina, 2003;
Texas, 2003; and
Florida, 2004.

FAIR SHOTS

ARTHUR GRACE RETURNS TO DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY, WHILE THE LAW DECIDES WHAT HIS DECADES OF ACCLAIMED WORK IS WORTH.

Arthur Grace's new book, *State Fair* (University of Texas Press, \$35) shows what a documentary photographer with a keen eye for detail and a dose of surrealism in his soul can do while shooting even the most clichéd of events. "State fairs are weird and glorious," says Grace. "They represent everything that America is about—free enterprise, tradition, family values, as well as kitsch."

A collection of photographs made at 10 different state fairs over the past 30 years, the book was the most personal project Grace ever undertook. "It was all done on spec," he says. "It's funny, when

you start out in photography, you pay for your projects yourself and hope someone notices you and starts giving you paid assignments. Now I've come full circle: I'm working on spec again, but this time it's to keep control over the project."

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Grace was well past the career stage of working on spec. Shooting for the Sygma agency, he covered presidential campaigns in 1980, 1984, and 1988. He documented Poland under martial law, and he photographed in China in 1985, when the country was still largely closed to Westerners. Then, after shooting a book about comedians in the early 1990s, he moved to Los Angeles to become a commercial photographer.

But the past has a way of catching up with you. "A couple of years ago I just felt this need to get back to reality-based photography," says Grace. "I needed to get back to my roots." Back in the late 1970s he had taken some pictures at the Minnesota State Fair during a layover there, and he'd always vowed to go back to the project.

In late 2005, just as he was completing his work on the state fair book, another aspect of Grace's photojournalistic past caught up with him. In December, a decision was handed down in a lawsuit he had brought against Corbis Corporation, which bought the Sygma agency in 1999. Corbis, Grace claimed, had lost 66,000 of his original images. If he had been compensated with the long-standing industry standard of \$1,500 per lost image, he would have been a rich man. Instead, the judge in the case ruled that only 40,000 images had been lost, then assessed their value at \$100 for selects and \$1 for non-selects. In the end, Grace was awarded \$436,000 for his lost photos. He is appealing the decision. "Those images represented 25 years' worth of work, but they also represented history," he says.

—JEFFREY ELBIES

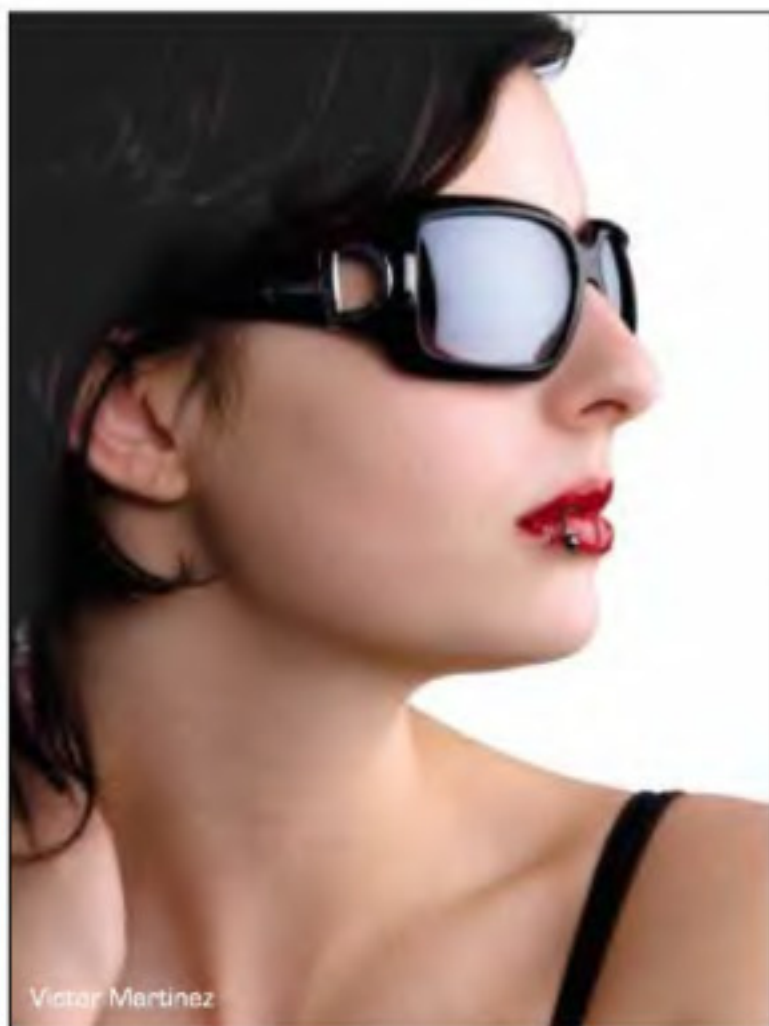
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EXHIBITIONS

JILL GREENBERG ANSWERS THE CRITICS WHO CLAIM SHE ABUSES TODDLERS IN THE NAME OF ART. BY JEFFREY ELBIES

When Jill Greenberg conceived the idea of photographing crying children back in 2004, she didn't anticipate the attention the project would bring to her fledgling art career, or the furor it would raise. Greenberg, who lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two children, is already known as one of the country's most successful commercial photographers, with work for ad clients like Microsoft, Kraft, and Procter & Gamble and magazines like *New York* and *Time*. She has emerged as a potent force in fine art with a series of acutely lit portraits of monkeys and apes, which in turn led to her work with children.

Your images have certainly caused an uproar. What do you say to people who call you a child abuser?

I think they're insane. I know the comment you're talking about. I don't know what the guy's personal problems are. I don't think he's got kids. I have a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, and she cries for no reason, a hundred times a day. It's normal. Maybe getting kids to cry isn't the nicest thing to do, but I'm not causing anyone permanent psychological damage.

How many kids did you shoot altogether? Around 35. Some were the children of friends, plus my own daughter; others came from the Ford or Jet Set model agencies. Kid models aren't very expensive—not as expensive as monkeys, for example.

How did you get the kids to cry?

Mostly we did it by giving them something, a lollipop, and then taking it away. Some would just cry for no reason—my daughter did that; she didn't like standing on the apple box I used for a platform because it was a little wobbly. Some just wouldn't cry at all. For all the kids I worked really fast. We would book 12 or so for one day, and see who we could make cry. At the end of the day I was not in a good mood. I don't like making little kids cry.

The lighting is very dramatic. How did you accomplish that?

It's the same lighting I used for my portraits of monkeys, and I've been using it for some recent magazine cover portraits. It's really flattering frontal light, so the subject doesn't have to have any actual shine on his or her skin to appear shiny. None of the kids had any makeup on. And also I work on that shiny quality in postproduction.

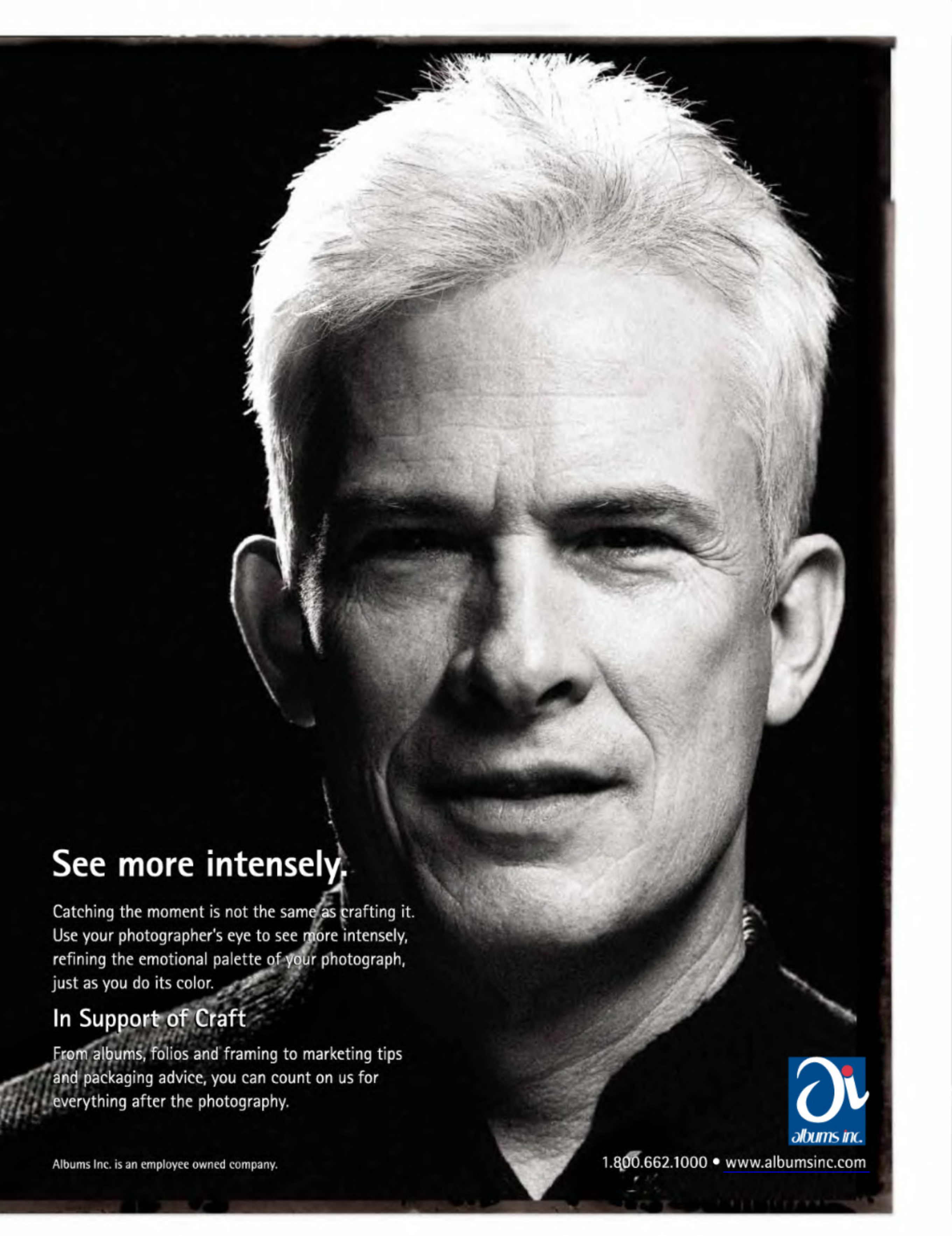
How did you come up with the idea for the project?

I saw this little girl who'd come to a party with her mom, and she was beautiful, so I thought it might be interesting to photograph her. When they came to my studio, the mother brought along her toddler son, and I decided to shoot him too. We took off his shirt because it was dirty. He started crying on his own, and I shot that, and when I got the contact sheets back I thought, "This could go with a caption, 'Four More Years,'" like he was appalled at George Bush's reelection.

The images have a real power—they immediately get under your skin.

The emotion you see is just so compelling, yet they're beautiful at the same time. That was one of the things that interested me about the project—the strength and beauty of the images as images. I also thought they made a kind of political statement about the current state of anxiety a lot of people are in about the future of the country. Sometimes I just feel like crying about the way things are going. ■

Greenberg images, from top: "Postdiluvian," "Grand Old Party," and "Coverup."



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MARK EDWARD HARRIS

As the six pallbearers hoisted the dark brown wooden casket onto their shoulders, the voice of the occupant echoed off the walls of the sanctuary at the Riverside Church in Harlem: "This is no farewell, but a gathering of those to act and make the crying of others much easier to bear." Thanks to a documentary projected at the front of the church, Gordon Parks spoke the last word at his own funeral, giving comfort to those who had come to bid him good-bye as he went to join his long-departed parents, Sarah and Jackson Parks, and the son who shared his name. The life of a child that began in the poverty of a clapboard house on the Kansas prairie ended in the opulence of a high-rise apartment opposite the United Nations. The pews of the church at his funeral sparkled with the likes of Gloria Vanderbilt and Lenny Kravitz. Smiling, while wiping away tears, I thought back to a time a few years earlier when I spent an evening with him in his 10th-floor apartment at the United Nations Plaza, a thousand miles and nearly a hundred years from his humble beginnings in Fort Scott, Kansas. On that night he told me about a life that began with a prophecy that was kick-started when a quick-thinking doctor plunged his stillborn body into a pan of ice water. "I started screaming and I haven't stopped," he recalled, laughing joyously.

Gordon Parks was a work in progress until the day he died, a dapper mass of creative energy, adrift in a boundless universe of his own creation. His was a restless spirit, guided by instincts and the ever present voice of his mother telling him that he could "do anything as well as a white boy."

"And if you can't," she had said, "don't come home."

He was unique among that generation of post-depression-era photographers at *Life* magazine who documented America's emergence from the shadows of social disparity and racial disharmony to its ascendancy as a military and economic giant. From the beginning, he was one of the "others" who often were the subjects of *Life's* photographers. His success in bridging the two worlds eventually made him a "stranger in one and social oddity in another."

Today, with Oprah more powerful than *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham in her heyday, and Time Warner,

GORDON PARKS

Above left:
Parks in 1996.
Opposite: His
iconic image
"American
Gothic," 1942.





Left: Parks's
1963 photo of
Malcolm X.
Opposite:
"Paris Fashions
(Variant)," 1950.



the parent company of *Life* magazine, headed by an African-American, it's difficult to imagine the America in which Parks grew up. It was a country where lynching in the South was as common as church socials, and often celebrated with the same festive spirit. Meanwhile, in the North, whites lived a life of self-serving denial. Parks's arrival on the scene was not universally celebrated on either side of the color line. But his presence was something that could not be denied, and, in time, it helped change the way that white America looked at blacks and how blacks looked at themselves. His marquee successes paved the way for those who followed.

Gordon Parks was born November 30, 1912, the last of 15 children. When his mother, Sarah Parks, died after his 15th birthday, the family that had nurtured him lost its core. Young Gordon was sent to live in Minnesota with an older sister and her husband, who, for some reason, disliked him instantly. By the time Parks was 16, he was out on the street, riding the bus between St. Paul and Minneapolis to escape the frigid nights. His first real job was playing a piano in a brothel.

His formal education was over by the time he was 17. For the next twelve years he worked at a series of odd jobs that barely earned him enough to feed himself and provide some

Clockwise from below left: "Flavio da Silva After Asthma Attack," 1961; Ingrid Bergman in 1956; Parks at his 90th birthday celebration.



© GORDON PARKS ESTATE/COURTESY HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY (3)

kind of shelter. The jobs included playing with a professional basketball team, washing dishes in a restaurant, and bussing tables at Minneapolis's Lowry Hotel, from which the Mutual radio network broadcast the sounds of the big bands of the day.

One of the band leaders, Larry Duncan, walked into the empty dining room, where Parks sat at the piano, playing a tune he had composed. Duncan was taken with the beauty of the composition and asked Parks what it was called. "'Lost Love,' and I wrote it," replied Parks. Over the objections of his father and at his mother's insistence, Parks had started taking piano lessons when he was six and had continued until his mother died. They were starting to pay off.

Parks played by ear, so Duncan had his arranger put the composition on sheet music, and it was played over the next Mutual broadcast. For a moment, Parks enjoyed instant celebrity and had

the "questionable" honor of being the first black musician to play with a noted white orchestra, introducing their theme song on piano before they went on. His career as a musician was short-lived, however.

After gigs in Minneapolis and Kansas City, the band hit the road on a bus for New York. Duncan skipped out on the band when it reached the Big Apple, and Parks was stranded. After a few months of living hand to mouth, he turned to the depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided plentiful meals and backbreaking work. Under the false illusion of security, he hopped a train to Minnesota and married his girlfriend, Sally Alvis. They moved to Philadelphia and lived there until the Conservation Corps job ended. Before long, they were back home with Sally's parents. Parks found a job waiting tables at St. Paul's Minnesota Club. His hard work brought him to the attention of one of the club's members, James Hill, president of Northern Pacific Railway. He suggested that Parks interview for a job with his company. Parks was soon making regular runs on the North Coast Limited between St. Paul, Chicago, and Seattle. On these runs, he collected magazines left behind by the passengers.

The pictures by Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Carl Mydans, and other documentary photographers fascinated him. One day during a stopover in Seattle, he walked into a pawnshop and inquired about a camera in the window. The store's owner wanted \$12.50 for the 35mm Voigtländer, but he accepted the \$7.50 that Parks had to offer and threw in a couple rolls of film. Another customer showed Parks how to load it. When he got the film developed back in Minneapolis, the clerk at the Eastman Kodak store was so impressed that he offered to give Parks an exhibition.

After studying the fashion pictures he saw in a copy of *Vogue* left behind by a train passenger, Parks got up the nerve to walk



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“THE DAY I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND SAW GORDON LOOKING BACK, I KNEW ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE.”

into an exclusive women's store and ask if he could shoot fashion photos for them. After agreeing on the number of models and outfits, he was out the door to borrow a Speed Graphic camera from a friend and get a quick course on how to operate it. He returned to the store the next evening, ready to work. The confidence and poise he displayed impressed the owners, but in the lab disaster struck. All but one picture was double exposed, so he made a large print of that image and placed it on an easel at the entrance to the store so the owners could see it. They asked to see the others. Parks explained what had happened, adding that the others were better than the one he'd printed.

He was allowed to reshoot the images, and his career was launched. Marva Louis, the wife of the heavyweight champion Joe Louis, saw his work at the store and suggested that he move to Chicago, where she would help him get more work. With a new baby, the Parks family moved to Chicago. Once there, Parks started to shoot documentary work in earnest, focusing on the city's ghettos. That work earned him a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, which brought with it the chance to do an internship in Washington, D.C., with the Farm Security Administration under Roy Stryker. The agency was already renowned for documenting poverty during the depression and launching the careers of the best photojournalists of the day. On his first day in Washington, Parks made a photograph of Mrs. Ella Watson, a black woman who had mopped floors for the government nearly all her life, posed with a mop in front of an American flag. He called it "American Gothic."



© GORDON PARKS ESTATE/COURTESY HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

During World War II, Stryker brought Parks to work for him at the Office of War Information as a correspondent. He joined the staff of *Life* magazine in 1949, after working for both *Vogue* and *Glamour*. His successful foray into fashion photography, just as he was cutting his teeth on documentary work, made him an instant celebrity in a world in which he was a total stranger. That he excelled in both is a testament to his genius. Parks inspired a generation of photographers, both black and white. It wasn't just his work but also his determination and desire to reinvent himself that captured the imagination of so many. He never grew tired of pushing the envelope. For me, he demonstrated that respecting his subjects was the first step toward winning their confidence. Whenever possible, he became a part of the subject's environment: "I never showed up with a camera and started shooting. I wanted people to get to know me as a person," he said.

In Brazil to work on a story about poverty, he slept on the floor of a favela to document the life of an asthmatic boy named Flavio da Silva, going to a hotel once a week to change clothes and shower. His essay on Flavio brought in thousands of dollars, enabling Parks to bring the boy to the United States for treatment.

In 1956, when he and journalist Sam Yette were sent to Alabama to document the impact of segregation on the Causey family, they slept on a front porch. When he was sent to Italy to photograph Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini, he took care not to invade the couple's privacy. All the world wanted to see a picture as proof of their controversial affair, and the couple usually took care not to be seen together. One day, however, when they forgot they were not alone, they embraced in the middle of the movie set. Parks, camera in hand, elected not to take the picture. "The golden moment was undeserving of betrayal," he said. Bergman and Rossellini were aware of his courtesy. The next morning, they invited him to bring his camera while they took a stroll together along the beach.

I was seven years old when Gordon Parks joined the staff of *Life*, and 12 when I got my own first camera. By that time, Parks had already discovered the wonders of Paris and beyond. At that point, my world didn't extend much farther than a few blocks beyond our front door on Baldwin Street on the east side of Detroit. The day I looked in the mirror and saw Gordon Parks looking back at me, I knew that anything was possible. I followed in his footsteps to France, Germany, and beyond as a staff photographer for *Newsweek*. Growing up, I'd thought that the only way a black man got to any of those places was by donning a uniform and becoming a soldier, as my father had done. Parks changed all that for me. He allowed me to explore the world on my own terms.

I cannot imagine that there is one black photographer, male or female, of my generation or later who doesn't feel the same way about Gordon. They may have developed a different sensibility about photography, but not about the man. Thanks to him, we're no longer an oddity in our own minds or in the eyes of the world. "Gordon Parks was like Rosa Parks," says the renowned jazz photographer Chuck Stewart. "A lot of us wanted to sit down, but she did it. There were black photographers before him, but he walked through the front door and did something." ■

Left: Parks's 1948 shot of Harlem gang leader Red Jackson.

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BOOK PUTS **DAVID
LACHAPELLE'S**
ASTONISHING CAREER
INTO PERSPECTIVE.
BY JEFFREY ELBIES

Desperate housewives are never more desperate than the ones in David LaChapelle's photographs. The image at right, part of a recent fashion story shot for *Italian Vogue*, has all the essential LaChapellian motifs: sex, chaos, humor, and a healthy disrespect for visual logic. When he looks at a suburban street, he sees a surreal landscape in which the quaint lives of soccer moms can be disrupted by sudden disaster, from a violent storm (in this case a hurricane) to the violent sexual yearnings caused by the sighting of a rock star. This elegant mom blithely walks away from the turbulence, strangely ambivalent to the uprooted world around her. Perhaps, like LaChapelle himself, she simply enjoys the spectacle of it all.

"It's funny, but we shot those pictures in June of 2005, before Hurricane Katrina, and they were at *Italian Vogue* being printed when the hurricane hit, and all I could think of was that the pictures looked so much like the devastation I was seeing on television," says LaChapelle. Hurricanes happened to be on his mind. "My mom lives in Florida, and they've had so many







Opposite: "Elton
John at Home,"
Interview, 1997.
This page:
"Rize," 2002.

B O O K S





Left: "Madonna in Bombay, New York," *Rolling Stone*, 1998. Right: "Love Me," *Italian Vogue*, 2002.

“WHEN A CELEBRITY IS IN THE STUDIO,” LACHAPELLE SAYS, “I HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING ABOUT THEM TO LOVE, EVEN IF THEY AREN’T BEING VERY NICE.”

hurricanes there. So these pictures kind of represent how we’re all going about our daily lives, shopping for luxury goods and not worrying about bigger things like global climate change.”

It has always been easy—too easy, in fact—to see LaChapelle simply as a photographic provocateur who celebrates pop culture and its transcendent vulgarities. That’s primarily due to the nature of the work, most of which was made for magazines selling celebrities, fashion, and entertainment on a highly disposable monthly schedule.

It is only in looking back over his thirty years of work that one can see LaChapelle’s consistently ironic commentary on the culture around him. More than any of his contemporaries, LaChapelle has been determined throughout his career to create a photographic world all his own—a place that bears his personal stamp and operates under his very particular rules. He’s been called “the Fellini of photography,” a statement not at all hyperbolic. His supercharged colors and archly funny juxtapositions—a model crushed under an enormous inflatable hamburger; Elton John rocking out in a room full of cherries and bananas—reflected the tastes of MTV generation when he burst onto the scene in the mid-1980s. “His images are the candy-coated connective tissue of the modern pop culture animal,”

one commentator noted midway through the following decade. Lately he has dabbled successfully in documentary filmmaking with his 2005 film *Rize*, which another critic called “a gripping portrayal of the hip hop ghetto nation.” He also designed and directed Elton John’s 2004 Las Vegas extravaganza “The Red Piano.” But his legacy is still defined by the images he shoots for magazines and collects in books, particularly *LaChapelle Land* (1996) and *Hotel LaChapelle* (1999), both of which sold out initial print runs and became highly valued by collectors.

In another attempt to stake out the farthest reaches of his creative universe, LaChapelle is now bringing out a new book, and it too will be a hit with collectors—by design. Discreetly titled *Artists & Prostitutes*, it is being published by Taschen in a limited edition of 2,500 copies signed and dated by LaChapelle. The book is an oversized 13.6 x 19.7 inches, and at 688 pages it comprises a full retrospective of LaChapelle’s work—everything from his latest fashion pictures to his porno-chic imagery for *Arena* and other magazines, as well as his memorable portraits of celebrities whose cultural impact may well be far less enduring than his pictures—Lil’ Kim, Paris Hilton, Tupac Shakur, and Pamela Anderson, to name a few. “If there’s an exhibitionist left who wants his or her picture taken,” LaChapelle once said, “I’ll be there.”



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"Tutankhamen Monorail," *Vogue*, 2003.

Therein lies the meaning of the book's title. "Actually I wanted to call my first book *Artists & Prostitutes*, but the publisher wouldn't let me because he thought it was in bad taste," says LaChapelle. And the meaning? "It works on a lot of different levels," he says. "There are artists and prostitutes in the world, and I don't make a judgment about them, I photograph everyone the same way." In fact, says LaChapelle, "some of my best friends have been prostitutes, and sometimes to be an artist is to be a prostitute, and vice versa. I once read this great quote from a prostitute, who said that when she was with a client she always had to find something about him to love, even if it was just his shoes. And that's the way it is for me in photographing all the celebrities I do. For the time they're in the studio, I have to find something about them to love, even if they're not being very nice."

The book begins with an image LaChapelle made at the beginning of his career in 1985, a shot of the Beastie Boys in Times Square. The layout then places the surprising span of his career into perspective. "Up until now I don't think my work has been well understood except by the people I work closely with," he says. LaChapelle takes particular exception to the idea that he is just a digital magician who produces his amped-up images in Photoshop. "It's true that I was employing digital technology early on, because I had a grant from a Japanese company to test out their equipment," he says. "But in fact what we

really do is build sets, paint backdrops, and all the images exist in real time. We don't do all that much in postproduction." His famous shot of a nude Lil'Kim covered in Louis Vuitton logos, for instance, required the diminutive rapper to be body painted. The driving vision springs more from an instinct for theater than from digital know-how. "I'm really not that interested in computers," LaChapelle says.

He also dislikes the idea that he has only one trick, or one emotional response, to every subject. "I don't allow myself to be just the guy who's a clown, who does all the wild colors and light, funny photos," he says. "Not allowing myself to be categorized is what's kept me around for so long. And I think this book represents that—it's the first time all the work has been put together in one place."

Plumbing a 30-year career and editing it down even to a relatively expansive 688 pages would seem to be a daunting task, and indeed LaChapelle spent three years planning and laying out *Artists & Prostitutes*. Some photographers say they hate looking at their past work, preferring whatever current project they happen to be working on. "I really enjoy looking back to see what I've done, and where I've been," says LaChapelle. "Each picture is a record of what I was doing, who was working on the shot with me, people I was in love with who I put into the images in some way. For me, my commercial work is also a personal photo album of my world." And it is one thrilling place. ■

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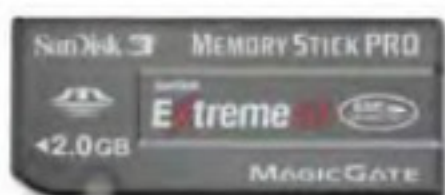
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THE AMERICAN PHOTO MISSION SERIES

On the following pages, you will find an exclusive look at one of the most challenging, and satisfying, endeavors ever undertaken by *American Photo* magazine. Ordinarily, our job is to find and publish the best images made by the world's top photographers. For the *American Photo* Mission Series, however, we asked six photographers to go out and create new bodies of work, all focusing on the subject of volunteerism. Our goal, simply, was to document the spirit that drives people to work and sacrifice in order to improve the lot of others. But the photographers who undertook the task—*National Geographic's* Steve McCurry, fine-art photographer Phil Borges, veteran commercial photographers Vincent Versace and Matthew Jordan Smith, Frank Jacobs III and the photo staff of the New Jersey *Trenton Times*, and nature photographer Art Wolfe—ended up doing much more. They uncovered and illuminated the workings of charities that feed and house the poor, that find missing children, that protect our natural resources, that provide an enriching setting of competition and companionship for the physically and mentally challenged, and that bring education to a hard-put ethnic group in Afghanistan. In doing so, they displayed the instinct for compassion that has always driven photography.

In response, we have produced a series of books featuring the work of three of these photographers, as well as a unique Website that features all the work and provides information on the organizations that we spotlight. (Go to americanphotomag.com/missionseries.) In this issue of *American Photo* we offer a preview of the work, and we're certain you will be inspired by the results.

This effort would not have been possible without the help of Microsoft, which funded the entire project and provided technical assistance throughout. It is our hope that this is just the beginning of a continuing interest in the people and organizations that are doing so much for us all. —David Schonauer



INTRODUCTION

The Art of Passion



It seems that every discussion of volunteerism in America begins with a reference to Alexis de Tocqueville, the prescient French aristocrat who traveled to America in the 1830s to observe its young democratic government and vibrant society. In the second volume of his magnum opus, *Democracy in America*, he noted that Americans were endowed with a deep sense of responsibility to others. Though Tocqueville has been oft-quoted, his words remain illuminating: “Although private interest directs the greater part of human actions in the United States...it does not regulate them all, and I have noticed a hundred instances in which they hardly ever failed to lend faithful support to one another. The free institutions which the inhabitants of the United States possess, and the political rights of which they make so much use, remind every citizen, and in a thousand ways, that he lives in a society.... Men attend to the interests of the

public, first by necessity, afterwards by choice; what was intentional becomes an instinct, and by dint of working for the good of one’s fellow citizens, the habit and the taste of serving them are at length acquired.”

Today, as then, America is unique in its native spirit of volunteerism. The signs are everywhere, in small towns and big cities, in red states and blue states. Look, and you will see what Tocqueville saw.

Looking is the essential act that lies at the heart of *American Photo* magazine’s Mission Series project. By asking six different photographers to travel the world to document the instinct of individuals to work for a public good, we are, in a sense, harkening back to photography’s earliest days. With its ability to freeze intimate moments of reality while also suggesting the epic scope of men’s lives, photography has been a force for social change since its invention in the mid-1800s. It isn’t surprising that so

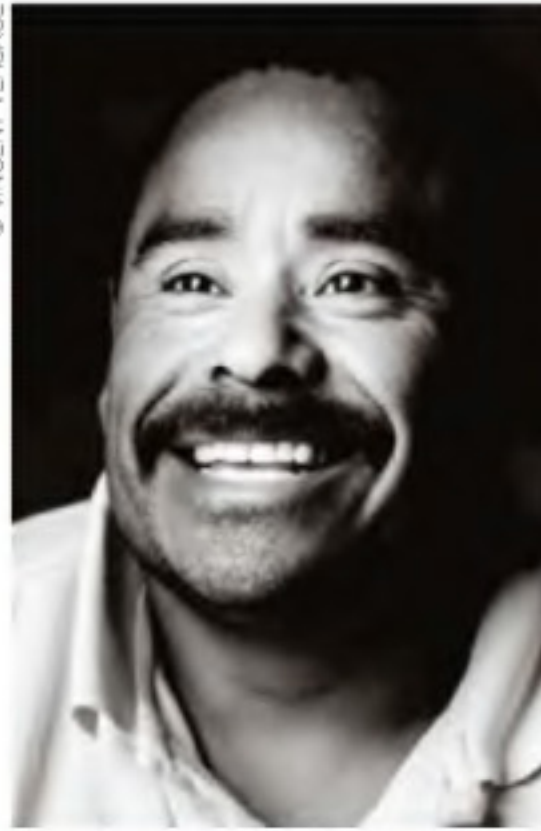
many photographers—from Jacob Riis in the late 1800s to W. Eugene Smith in the mid-1900s—have so passionately believed that their pictures can help change the world for the better.

That particular brand of optimism animates every page you are about to see. The organizations whose work has been documented by our photographers face a world full of needs and challenges—sometimes what seem to be a crushing number of challenges. They include a group of charities that help address problems in New York City—organizations like VASCA, which helps low-income older adults become less isolated; the New York Restoration Project, which revitalizes underserved city parks; and City Harvest, which salvages unused food to provide meals to the hungry. There is also Earthjustice, which aids groups that litigate to protect natural resources. And there is ImagineAsia, whose sole purpose is to pro-

© MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH



© VINCENT VERSACE



© STANLEY BRICK



© PHIL BORGES



© ART WOLFE



Clockwise from far left: McCurry's photo of Hazara children; Smith's shot of a rally for a missing child; Versace's photo of an InnVision client; a *Trenton Times* image of a Special Olympics star; Art Wolfe's photo of owlets in ANWR; Borges's shot of Nancy Sweetser, founder of New York's Miracle House.

vide access to basic education for Afghans whose lives have been disrupted by years of war. There is the wonderful Special Olympics organization and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. And there is InnVision, an organization that annually serves some 16,000 homeless and at-risk people throughout California's Silicon Valley, a region better known for its wealth. As diverse as their interests are, all these groups share a common goal: to improve lives, sometimes in small, incremental ways, and sometimes on a grand scale.

Passion is the force that animates the thousands of people who volunteer to make the world a better place. Passion is also a word that often comes up when describing photographers and the work they do. Every picture is a promise, a leap of faith that in seeing the world as it is, we will be moved to make it better. That hope, as Tocqueville observed, can become a way of life.

HOW TO CONTACT THE MISSION SERIES CHARITIES AND GET INVOLVED

New York Cares
(212) 228-5000
nycares.org

Coalition for the Homeless
(212) 776-2002
coalitionforthehomeless.org

Citymeals-on-Wheels
(212) 687-1290
citymeals.org

Miracle House
(212) 989-7790
miraclehouse.org

City Harvest
(917) 351-8700
cityharvest.org

VASCA
(212) 768-9166, vasca.org

Puppies Behind Bars
(212) 680-9562
puppiesbehindbars.com

The Fresh Air Fund
(212) 897-8890
freshair.org

God's Love We Deliver
(212) 294-8137
godslowewedeliver.org

All Stars
(212) 941-9400
allstars.org

New York Restoration Project
(212) 333-2552
nyrp.org

Earthjustice
(510) 550-6700
earthjustice.org

ImagineAsia
(212) 722-7039
imagine-asia.org

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
1-800-THE-LOST
(1-800-843-5678)
missingkids.com

InnVision
(408) 292-4286
innvision.org

Special Olympics
(202) 628-3630
specialolympics.org



Opposite: Arctic wildflowers in ANWR. Below: A moose skull in the Jago River.



The people who want to drill for oil in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge won't take no for an answer. The refuge is part of Alaska's coastal plains, a low-lying tundra nestled between the Brooks Range and the Arctic Ocean, and, as nature photographer Art Wolfe notes, it has been the focus of heated debate ever since oil was discovered below its frozen expanse. Environmentalists and their political allies have turned back plans for drilling in the refuge several times, but members of the pro-oil lobby, including Alaska's Senator Ted Stevens, keep introducing new legislation to begin development. And that, says Wolfe, is why pictures like those he made for the Mission Series are so important. The images show that the region is not, as some have said, a barren wasteland but a home to more than 250 animal species, includ-

ing grizzlies, wolves, caribou, and millions of migratory birds. Indeed, Wolfe calls this place "America's Serengeti."

Wolfe undertook his photographic mission to Alaska on behalf of **Earthjustice**, a group of environmental lawyers that represents hundreds of organizations that enforce and promote environmental laws. The organization has helped defend not only the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge but also millions of acres of unspoiled wildlife habitat in the western Arctic.

Can photographs help environmentalists stand up to powerful political forces aligned against them? Time and again, the answer has been yes. "As a photographer who has made a living for the past 30 years documenting the natural world, I feel a special obligation to reveal what is at risk," says Wolfe.



© KATE BALDWIN

Showing what, exactly, is at stake in the battle over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

ART WOLFE

FIELD NOTES Wolfe recalls clearly the pre-digital days of photography, when he would have to hike his film out of remote areas, past suspi-

cious airport guards, and wait until he was back in his Seattle studio to see if his pictures were any good. These days he shoots with a D-SLR, the 16-megapixel

Canon EOS 1Ds Mark II, then offloads his images to his Toshiba laptop running Windows XP Pro, while still on location. "There is a wealth of tools avail-

able to me in the field that allow me to get closer to a finished product before I get home," he says. "It means I have more creative options than ever."

Below: A competitor in the long jump trial of the Special Olympics New Jersey.

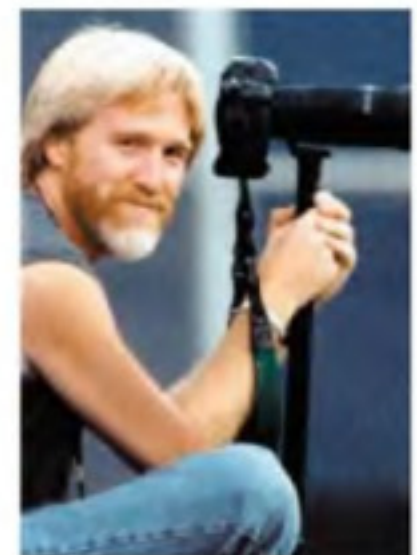


A therapist once said that her clients refer to people with no physical or mental disabilities as “temporarily abled.” The label simply points out that even the healthiest among us will one day, in the course of aging or injury, be faced with some form of disability. From this particular perspective, most of us truly are, at best, only temporarily abled. It all depends on how you look at things.

For Frank Jacobs III, a photographer with the *Trenton Times*, covering the New Jersey **Special Olympics** brought a similar new perspective to the idea of competition. He came to realize that he was not just shooting gifted and disciplined athletes with intellectual disabilities. “They deserve to be classified as elite athletes, period,” says Jacobs.

Consider Donald Biscoti, who bench-presses 400 pounds and helps other members of his fitness center use perfect form. “We have some pretty remarkable athletes, and they’re at that level because they train throughout the year and they’ve committed to their sports,” says Marc Edenzon, president of the Special Olympics New Jersey.

The Special Olympics is an international organization that provides year-round sports training and competition to more than 1.7 million people with intellectual disabilities in 150 countries. What Jacobs and his photo staff discovered when they covered the competition in their state between 2001 and 2004 was the pride that comes from such commitment. It was written on every athlete’s face.



The photo staff of New Jersey’s *Trenton Times* captures the Special Olympics spirit. **FRANK JACOBS III**

FIELD NOTES Covering the Special Olympics was a labor of love for the photo staff of the *Trenton Times*. The work was done on a volunteer basis during

off hours from the newspaper, so the photographers ended up using their own equipment. “Many of us have bought Dell or other PC laptops with our own

money to do our personal and our newspaper work,” says Frank Jacobs III. He particularly values the ease of working with Windows XP Pro’s My Pictures fea-

ture. “I create folders for each day and subfolders for my favorite edits,” he says. “Then I can combine the various folders into one for simple organization.”



Katie Terzian
receiving a gold
medal in the
50-meter dash
at the Mercer
County Special
Olympics.

Below: Kids at a child-safety event in Ft. Smith, Arkansas.



© MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH (3)



© MARIA DICKERSON

This project was an emotional journey," says photographer Matthew Jordan Smith, whose Mission Series assignment was to document the history and efforts of the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children**. The organization grew out of the work of John and Reve Walsh, the parents of a six-year-old boy, Adam, who was abducted from a shopping mall and murdered in 1981. Following the tragedy, the Walshes' successful lobbying work eventually led to the federal Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, which mandated a national resource center for information on abducted children. That became the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

For the Mission Series, Smith photographed the Walshes, as well as other parents whose lives have been upended by similar tragedy—and some luckier ones who were

reunited with their children. Among that group were Lois and Ed Smart, who were able to pose for Smith with their daughter, Elizabeth (right). Elizabeth Smart became a household name in 2002 after she was abducted by self-proclaimed prophet Brian David Mitchell. Now 17, Elizabeth is happy, well adjusted, and safe. "She's one of the very lucky ones," says Smith. "It is impossible for anyone who hasn't gone through what these families have to really know what they have endured."

Smith's journey included some hands-on help. Last September he was called on to assist the center in escorting a family of six children, ages 3 to 16, and another 14-year-old boy who had been separated from their parents by Hurricane Katrina. "It was," says Smith, "an amazingly rewarding experience."

MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH Documenting a growing network of safety for our children.

FIELD NOTES "This project involved many individual photo shoots all around the United States," says Smith. "I grew to appreciate how much I am helped

by digital tools." At each location, Smith downloaded photos from his Canon D-SLR to a Dell Latitude D600 laptop, allowing him to review work on the spot.

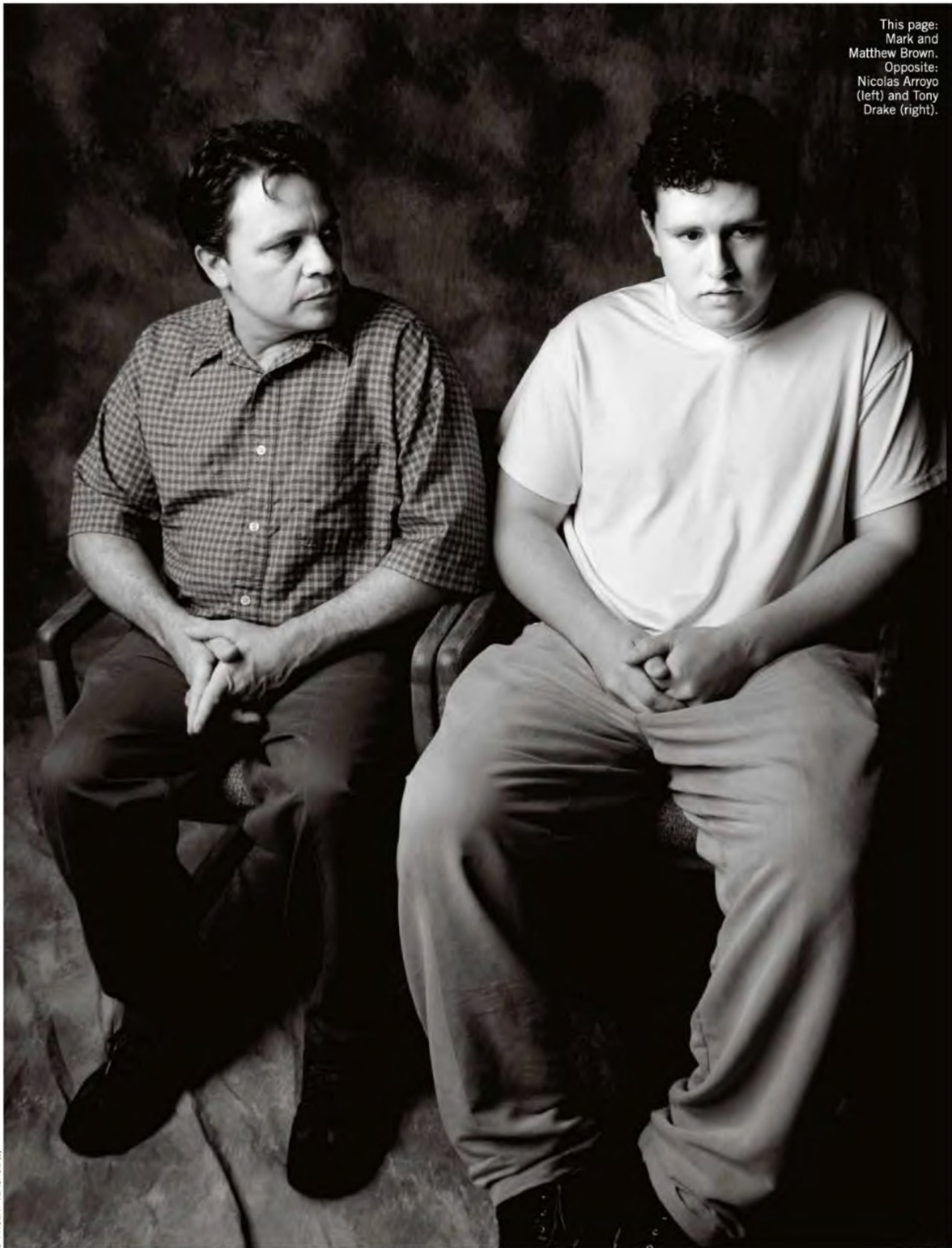
Some images were shot on film, and those were later scanned with an Imacon 343 Flextight scanner. Postproduction processing was done on two Dell Dimen-

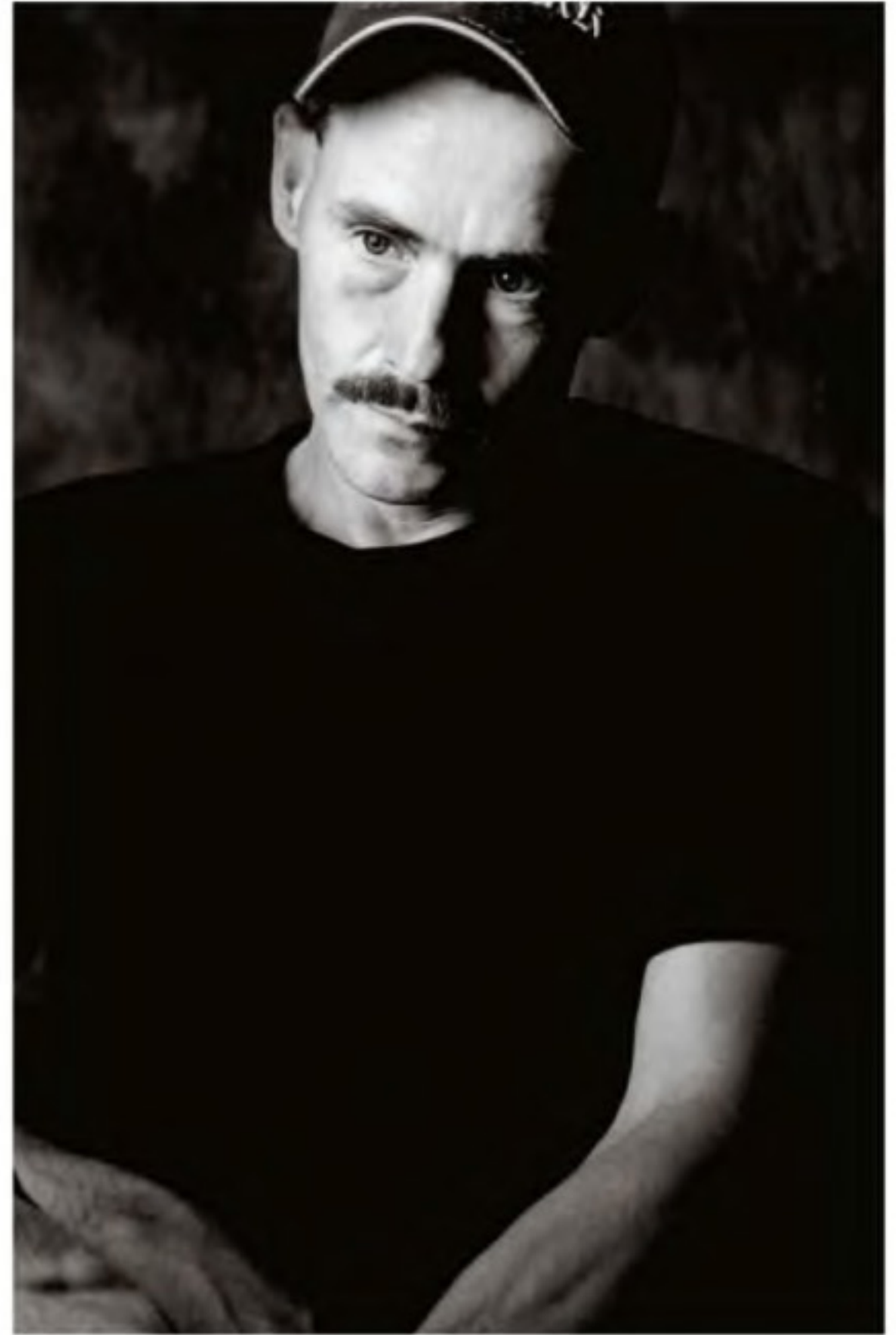
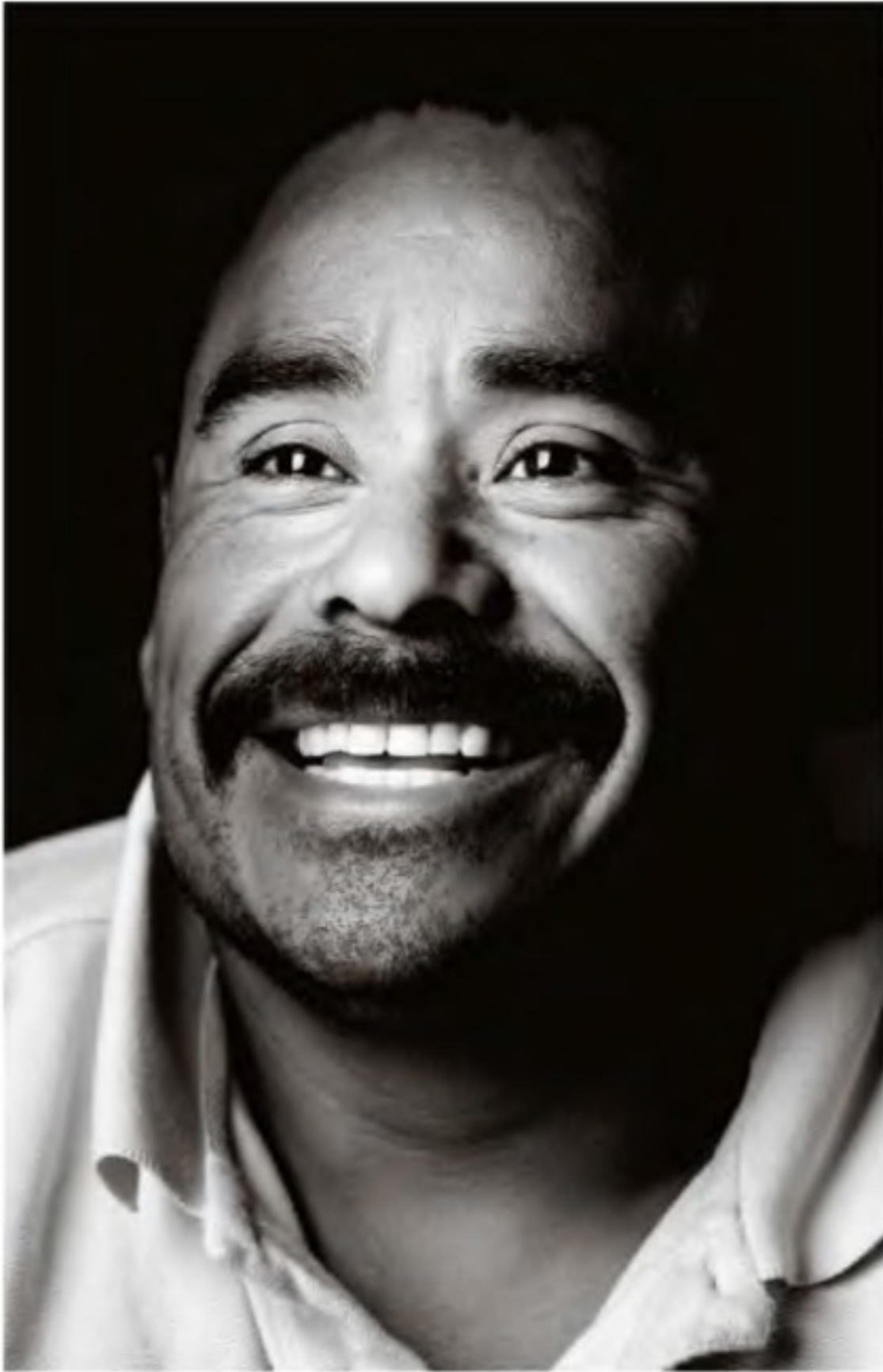
sion workstations networked using Windows XP Pro. The final step of the digital workflow was printing selected images on an Epson 9600 wide-format printer.



Elizabeth Smart
with her parents
in their Utah
home. She was
abducted in
June 2002 and
found nine
months later.

This page:
Mark and
Matthew Brown.
Opposite:
Nicolas Arroyo
(left) and Tony
Drake (right).





Though there was a profound amount of beauty that I was allowed to see and experience at **InnVision**, very little of it was pretty," says Los Angeles-based photographer Vincent Versace.

InnVision, the organization that Versace photographed for the Mission Series, annually serves some 16,000 homeless and at-risk people in 20 sites throughout California's Silicon Valley, providing housing, food, health care, and job training with a full-time staff of 100 and more than 2,000 volunteers. "What touched me the most was the invisible line in the sand drawn by [these] people," says Versace. "It was as if they are collectively saying, 'This injustice stops here.'"

Versace's formal black-and-white portraits of both the volunteers and the clients of InnVision put a human face

on the statistics of homelessness. There was Nicolas Arroyo (above left), a resident of InnVision's men's facility who uses a wheelchair because of childhood polio. His goals were simple and powerful: "Hopefully my home will be stable, not on the street," he said. There was Tony Drake (above right), another men's facility resident who was serving as a liaison between the guests and the staff. "I've been here three months, mostly a result of poor management of my money and a divorce," he said. Helping the other guests, he said, "makes me feel good." And there were Mark Brown and his 16-year-old son Matthew (left), who were living in a van but helping to serve meals to others. "[It helps me] prove to myself that I can do something," said Mark.



Putting a human face on the statistics of homelessness.

VINCENT VERSACE

FIELD NOTES "All I am really good at is making pictures, seeing the pretty and telling the truth," says Versace. "And the truth is that every image

I made for this project portrays our neighbors' children. Every person on these pages is the kid who lives next door." Shooting digitally, Versace was able to

review each image he made on location, on his PC laptop running Windows XP Pro. The images were imported into Photoshop CS2 for minor digital

darkroom revisions. "I learned from this project that there is no greater rush than using our God-given talents to do something good," says Versace.



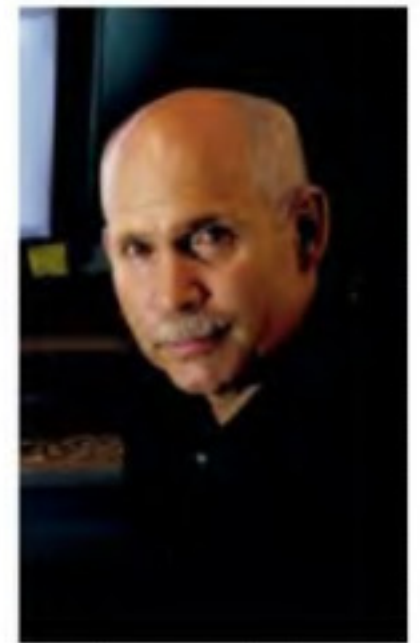
Left: A homeless Afghan boy.
Below: Bamiyan.



When I crossed the border to Afghanistan in 1979, just in time to document the Russian invasion, I didn't dream that the country and her people would have such a profound influence on my life and my work," says Steve McCurry, who has shot all across the globe for a variety of magazines. In the 1980s, while photographing at a refugee camp in Afghanistan, McCurry made a portrait of a young girl with haunting hazel eyes that would indeed change his life. The image became one of the best-known covers of *National Geographic* and a touchstone in his career. In those days, following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan, there was broad hope that peace and political stability would descend on Afghanistan; then came a civil war in which the militant Islamic Taliban seized control of much of the country. The Taliban's favor-

ite targets were the Hazara people of central Afghanistan. Their beautiful town, Bamiyan, was taken, and the two ancient Buddhas embedded in a nearby cliff were destroyed. Following the American invasion of Afghanistan, McCurry was able to go back to photograph the land and the people he had grown to love. And that is where his work for the Mission Series began.

McCurry returned to photograph the work being done by an organization called **ImagineAsia**, which he himself helped found and direct. The goal of ImagineAsia is to provide access to basic education and health care for Hazara children. His love for the Hazara and the land is evident in all his portraits and landscapes. "It is impossible to spend time [there] and not feel compelled to help its most helpless people," he says.



Returning to his beloved Afghanistan to help the children of the Hazara.

STEVE McCURRY

FIELD NOTES Over a 28-year career, McCurry figures he has shot an average of 30 rolls of film a day. That translates to about 6,350,400 images that

need editing, scanning, cataloging, and retouching. What's more, McCurry says he has never discarded a single image. His state-of-the-art digital studio in New

York City lets him handle all that imagery. After a project is done, selects are scanned and cataloged in Extensis Portfolio, and the photos are imported into

Photoshop CS2 for retouching work. McCurry installed a Microsoft Windows Small Business Server as a focal point for his networked computers.



This spread,
clockwise from
above: Kliot,
Midler, Newman.

SPECIAL PROJECT



As a fine-art photographer, Phil Borges has attracted a devoted following with a stylistic brand of portraiture. The widely traveled Borges is also a social activist, having started his own nonprofit organization, Bridges, which brings together writers and photographers to mentor kids in isolated communities in Kenya, Peru, and Guatemala. For the Mission Series, Borges and photographer Ian Wingfield set their sights closer to home, documenting the work of 11 organizations that offer solutions to a wide range of New York City's social needs. These groups included the **New York Restoration Project**, an organization founded by entertainer Bette Midler (opposite, top) to restore underserved parks and open space in the city; **City Harvest**, co-founded by Jason Kliot (above), which puts volunteers to use in salvaging unused food from restaurants and providing

it to the city's hungry; and the **All Stars Project**, cofounded by Fred Newman (opposite, below), which provides performing arts activities for poor and minority people. (See page 43 for a full list of the organizations Borges photographed.)

"There is a massive transformation going on in our society," says Borges. "Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people are coming forward to solve problems that free-market economics and governments fail to address." Borges calls these people "social entrepreneurs," and to his artistic eye they are the perfect photographic subjects. "I'm constantly reminded of the adage that says by the time we are 40 we wear the faces we have earned," he says. "No amount of cosmetic surgery can hide a countenance buffeted by years of anger or self-absorption, and no surgery can create the beauty of a face nurtured by compassion and kindness."

PHIL BORGES Capturing the faces of compassion in New York City.



FIELD NOTES Photographing the volunteers, founders, and operations of 11 separate charities in a single week challenged Borges's organizational skills. When he's shooting in the field, and especially on sprawling jobs like this one for the Mission Series, Borges has learned to depend on technology. "I like using the Microsoft RAW Image Thumbnailer and Viewer for Windows XP to get a quick glance at my images before I open them in Photoshop," he says. He also uses the Microsoft SyncToy, which automatically duplicates files when they are downloaded. "It's indispensable when you need to keep copies of files in two separate places," he says.





Art Wolfe
in Alaska.



Frank Jacobs
III working
at home.



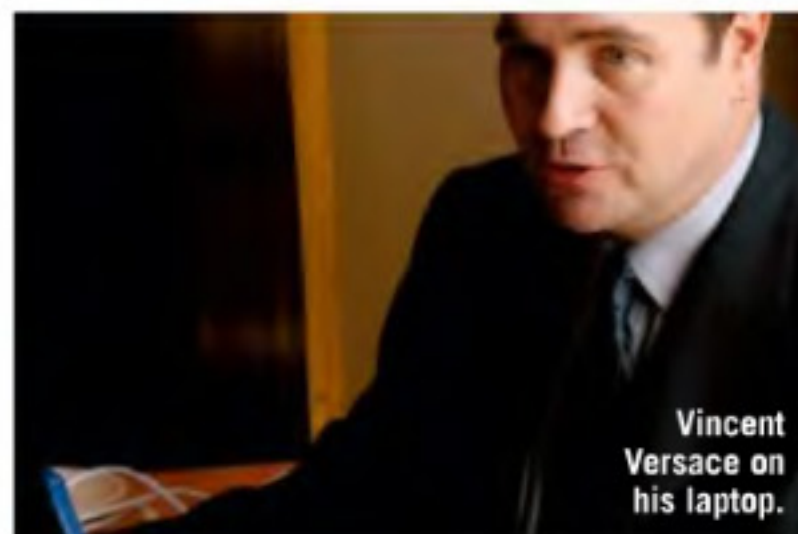
Matthew
Jordan
Smith in
his studio.



Phil Borges
on location.



Steve
McCurry in
his studio.



Vincent
Versace on
his laptop.

SPECIAL PROJECT

THE MAKING OF THE MISSION SERIES

In the field or in the studio, our six photographers used the latest technology to capture the plight of the neediest and the passion of all those who help them.

For some of the photographers who donated their time to shoot the *American Photo* Mission Series, the job meant traveling to remote locations, such as Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or the Afghan town of Bamiyan. Others traveled shorter distances, but in the end each photographer reported feeling what Matthew Jordan Smith put into words when he said, "This project was an emotional journey." Deadline constraints meant that the work had to be done quickly and efficiently, which in turn meant that a smooth digital workflow would be crucial to the success of the project.

"Early in this project, I recognized the advantages that digital technology brings to my photography," says Smith. "With my busy shooting schedule and the tight project deadlines, we need more than one computer to stay on track, so having two high-end Dell Dimension workstations networked using Windows XP Professional was a blessing. We can scan, edit, retouch, print, communicate

with clients via e-mail, and burn CDs and DVDs all at the same time."

Steve McCurry's New York studio features multiple computers networked with a Microsoft Windows Small Business Server. Preparing the images for the Mission Series project presented special challenges because of the large number of pictures McCurry made in Afghanistan and because of the short deadlines. For McCurry, the aspect of digital workflow that appealed most, however, was the superior image quality it yielded. "The primary advantage of digital workflow is the control it provides," he says.

Working on the Mission Series required Phil Borges to take time away from his own nonprofit organization, Bridges, which builds ties between children of different cultures through photography. That organization essentially dictates the computer operating system Borges uses for all his work. "The whole developing world is PC-based," he says. "The advantages of this, in terms of

cost-efficiency, cannot be discounted."

Microsoft donated a full lab with 17 laptops to Borges's program, meaning that his organization now has a uniform platform that, as he puts it, "appeals to both amateur and pro photographers but doesn't confuse the kids we're working with."

For Vincent Versace, as well as for Frank Jacobs III, getting the Mission Series work shot, edited, retouched, and printed in the time frame of a week would have been impossible without the PCs they use for their own work. That goes as well for Art Wolfe, who is used to working in the remotest of locations. For Wolfe, digital photography and digital workflow are both means to arrive at a final photographic product while he is still on location and inspired by what he is seeing. "Reviewing shots immediately opens the photographers up to experimenting in ways never previously available," he says. "It all leaves me right where I want to be, on a mountain with my finger on the trigger, awaiting dawn."

AMERICAN
PHOTO

THE *Mission* SERIES

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© Andre Costantini using Tamron's 18-200mm lens



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PACO MÁRQUEZ
Photographer

"You have to learn the rules before you earn the right to break them," says Paco Márquez, photographer, innovator, DxO Image Master. "But once you understand light you can do things others cannot."

DxO Labs understands light and optics, which explains why DxO Optics Pro can do things other software cannot do.

"I want people to feel what I see—get the same impression I feel—a visual representation of what I experienced when I was there," continues Márquez. "That's why I've been using DxO Optics Pro ever since I discovered it."

Born in Mexico while his father attended medical school, Paco Márquez studied photography in California before returning to his native Puerto Rico. "My father would not let me pursue photography until I had a bachelor's degree," he told us. "It took me five years. 'Photography is not a profession,' my father would always say; still, he loved photography and was always surrounded by cameras."

DxO Optics Pro works automatically to enhance images captured by Digital SLRs and advanced compact digital cameras. It includes four powerful engines, each created through thousands of hours of scientific research and mathematical modeling, involving hundreds of camera and lens combinations. Literally thousands of images are captured and analyzed during the development of individual correction modules.

Image corrections are specific to the camera and lens combination used and are performed on an individual pixel level because different points in the image demonstrate different types of aberration. That's something other software products cannot do automatically. Depending on your preference you can select



Photos © Paco Márquez

from three work 'modes.' Choose "fully automatic" and DxO Optics Pro takes over, or set "expert controls" and manage all the settings yourself. Either way, the results are extraordinary.

DxO Optics Engine automatically corrects for lens distortion, vignetting, inherent lens softness (unsharpness) and chromatic aberrations. It also removes so-called "purple fringing" automatically.

DxO Noise Engine enables you to use an ISO setting up to 2 stops higher without increasing the noise level. "I have situations where I need to raise the ISO and still make a print the size of a billboard," Márquez told us. "I've shot at ISO 1600 and they looked like ISO 125."

DxO Lighting Engine is a unique local exposure and dynamic range optimizer. "I remember how I used to 'dodge' for hours when I printed in the darkroom," expands Márquez. "Now I shoot for flatter contrast. When I process the images with DxO I still have all the shadow detail. The DxO science is super. I appreciate what DxO has done for me in tight situations where I've had to come up with the goods."

"I think of DxO Raw Engine as my darkroom," Márquez continues. "It improves my workflow. I can export files in Adobe DNG format so I can go immediately to other applications." DxO RAW Engine also incorporates an exclusive demosaicing technology that enables you to achieve the best possible optical, lighting and noise correction on raw images.

"Once you understand light you can do things that others cannot do," concludes Márquez. "Once you have a mastery of technique, then you can break the rules. That's another big reason why I use DxO Optics Pro—it helps me create the most from the images I capture."

See more Paco Márquez masterpieces at www.pacomárquez.com. Learn more about DxO Optics Pro and the DxO Image Masters at www.dxo.com/paco.





July/August 2006

Our eighth annual Editor's Choice issue is now in front of you, and we hope you will find this compendium of photographic products to be a useful resource as you brave the world of imaging technology. Photography has always been an art based on science, and never more so than today, as advances hurtle us along with startling speed. To produce this special section we turned to Executive Editor Russell Hart and a team of experts, this year including contributing editors Jonathan Barkey and Steve Pollock, *Popular Photography* editors Dan Richards and Debbie Grossman, and writers Aimee Baldridge, formerly with CNET.com, and Phil Ryan, now CNET.com senior editor. In addition, Alexis Gerard, president of Future Image Inc., contributed an essay looking into photography's technological future. If the state of the art is this good now, just imagine what's coming down the road.

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ENTRY-LEVEL D-SLRs

CAMERA OF THE YEAR

The once-exclusive price of digital SLRs has descended to a level at which it's no longer a leap for compact-weaned photographers to leave the point-and-shoot nest. That trend will continue, given this year's big D-SLR news: the foray of CE giants Panasonic, Samsung, and Sony into the field. Yet our choice for entry-level D-SLR of the year is one of the *most* expensive of this affordable lot. Let us explain.

7.4
MEGAPIXELS
LIVE MOS
IMAGE
SENSOR

OLYMPUS EVOLT E-330

2X FOV
CROP

2.5 INCH
TILTING
LCD
SCREEN

ABOUT **\$1,000**

It's the first D-SLR that lets photographers compose pictures on a big, "live" external LCD, as well as in its optical reflex viewfinder. Accepts 14 Olympus Zuiko Digital E-system lenses, from 8mm fisheye to 300mm f/2.8 telephoto, plus Four Thirds-system optics from independent lensmakers.

Until the arrival of this first-of-its-kind model, digital photographers graduating from a point-and-shoot to a D-SLR had to give up a comfortable habit: Composing their pictures with the big LCD screen on the camera back. Instead, they were obliged to use the D-SLR's old-fashioned optical viewfinder, because the LCD screen was only for reviewing pictures already taken.

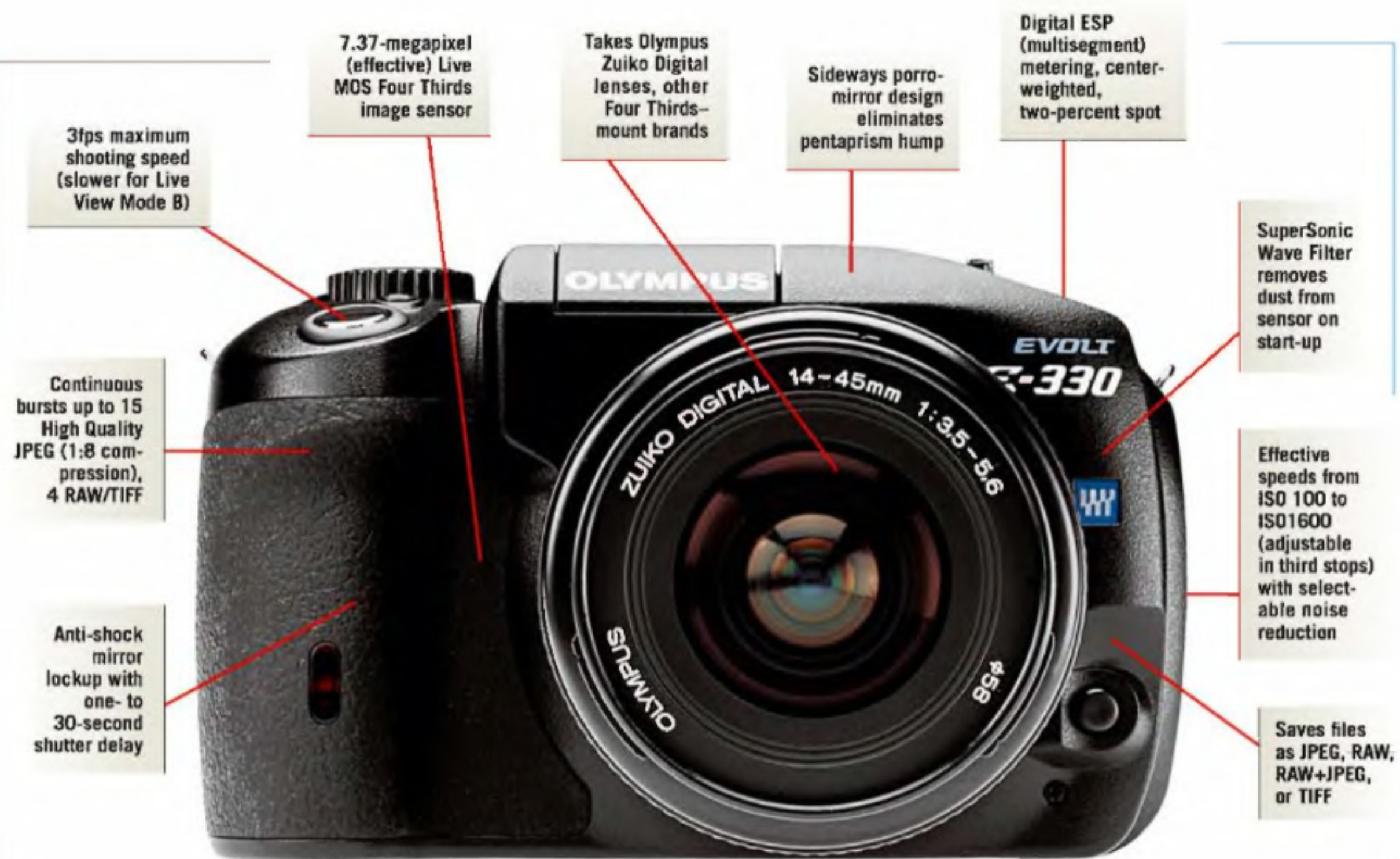
With the **Olympus EVOLT E-330**, those photographers don't have to change their ways. In addition to displaying what you've shot, this entry-level D-SLR's big, beautiful LCD gives you a "live" image with which to view and compose your subject. That's no mean feat, because until the instant of exposure, a digital SLR's reflex mirror intercepts light heading for the image sensor—bouncing it into the eye-level viewfinder, where it affords much brighter, sharper focusing and framing than you can get from an electronic viewfinder. How does the E-330 let you have it both ways? A mirror in its sideways, hump-flattening viewfinder diverts light to a smaller, second sensor, which in turn sends its image to the 2.5-inch external LCD screen. The eyepiece view remains entirely optical.

The E-330's hinged LCD screen can tilt up or down, a feature

found on some bigger point-and-shoots. This makes the camera a great tool for accurate low- or high-angle composition. The needed hardware adds some thickness to the camera, but we found this a small price to pay for the kind of unobtrusive, waist-level shooting we've been doing all along with digital compact cameras having articulated screens.

Of course, image quality from the E-330 is far better than what you get from a point-and-shoot, equal in our experience to that of its slightly older eight-megapixel sibling, the E-500. It's enhanced by optional noise reduction for both long exposures and speed settings from ISO 400 to 1600, as well as by the top-notch optics of Olympus's growing Four-Thirds-mount lens range.

Though the Olympus EVOLT E-330 costs several hundred dollars more than its least-expensive entry-level competitors, its live LCD makes it a great beginner's D-SLR—only with more flexibility than any compact, including the creative possibilities of interchangeable lenses. Just remember that when you mount that big tele you've saved up for, you'll have a hard time holding the E-330 steady if you're composing at arm's length on its LCD. Then it will be high time to bring the camera to your eye.



OTHER TOP CAMERAS



Pentax K100D

It is tempting to dismiss the K100D as a slightly tweaked six-megapixel Pentax D-SLR—until you spy a switch on the camera back marked with a shaky-hand icon, ordinarily only found on EVF models. The icon signals the unusual presence of image stabilization. What's unusual is that the K100D's stabilizer system is not built into individual lenses, as with the Canon and Nikon systems; it uses micro-motors in the camera body to shift the image sensor sideways (and up and down) to counteract image-blurring camera movement. Like lens-based systems the K100D's lets you shoot at shutter speeds up to three stops slower than you'd otherwise have to set for sharp hand-held results. And like Konica Minolta's late Anti-Shake system, Pentax's Shake Reduction has the advantage of working with any of the nearly four dozen lenses in the Pentax line. The only real disadvantage of sensor-based image stabilization in a digital SLR is that unlike the lens-based approach, you can't actually see it steadying the image through the optical viewfinder.

PENTAX K100D

6.0 MEGAPIXELS/
CCD IMAGE
SENSOR

1.5X FOV
CROP

2.5 INCH
LCD SCREEN

ABOUT
\$700
(WITH KIT LENS)

Few things do more to improve photographic quality than image stabilization, and this model builds it into the camera body—at an entry-level price.

But given the K100D's low price, which includes an 18–55mm f/3.5–5.6 Pentax DA lens, we can't complain. Besides, you also get an 11-point AF array; a "digital preview" that stores a shot in a temporary buffer so you can check and delete it faster; and eight new scene modes, including one purported to make kids look healthier. No kidding.

ENTRY-LEVEL D-SLRs

**BEST
BUY**



Samsung GX-1L

The significance of this modestly priced model belies its small proportions. It heralds the entry of Samsung into the D-SLR market. The GX-1L's resemblance to the Pentax K100D is no coincidence; it's the product of Samsung's collaboration with Pentax. The body is featherweight but solid, and its mount accepts 40-odd Pentax K-mount AF and manual-focus lenses in addition to two Schneider D-Xenon zooms, an 18–55mm and a 50–200mm.

Despite the camera's small profile, its viewfinder is bigger than those in several higher-priced models, and its LCD is notably large (2.5 inches) and sharp (210,000 pixels). At this price the GX-1L has simplified autofocus and a modest image buffer, and lacks the K100D's image stabilization. But it includes features you wouldn't expect in a starter model, such as a true spot meter and sensitivity up to ISO 3200. (An extra \$100 will buy you the Samsung GX-1S, which offers 11-point AF and more shots per burst.)

SAMSUNG GX-1L

6.1 MEGAPIXELS/
CCD IMAGE
SENSOR

1.5X FOV
CROP

2.5 INCH
LCD SCREEN

ABOUT
\$600
(WITH KIT LENS)

An ultracompact D-SLR that's surprisingly advanced for its price, with a best-of-class viewfinder and access to dozens of Pentax K-mount lenses.



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ADVANCED D-SLRs

CAMERA OF THE YEAR

If we had to pick a single *American Photo* camera of the year, the Nikon D200 would take that honor. Its combination of high-quality image capture, durability, speed, technology, and handling makes it best of class, and it can be had for way less than a "professional" model. This digital SLR defines its category: Advanced.

NIKON D200

10.2 CCD
IMAGE
SENSOR
MEGAPIXELS

1.5X
FOV CROP

2.5 INCH
LCD SCREEN

Midpriced D-SLR offers nearly the same image quality, and most of the features, of Nikon's professional D2X—in a smaller, lighter, and much more affordable package. You get state-of-the-art autofocus and exposure control, full weatherproofing, great ergonomics, and compatibility with almost every Nikon lens ever made.

Nikon's 18-70mm ED adds \$300.

ABOUT **\$1,700**

Midpriced digital SLRs are getting so good that even the most serious photographers should think twice before spending thousands of dollars on a so-called professional model. The **Nikon D200**, long-awaited successor to the aging, if well-regarded, Nikon D100, is a case in point. The camera manages to squeeze most core features of the top-of-the-line Nikon D2X (see page 70) into a smaller, lighter package that's actually closer in price to the entry-level D70s and D50.

Indeed, the D200's next-generation 10.2-megapixel CCD approaches the resolution of the 12.2-megapixel CMOS sensor in the D2X. The smaller-than-35mm "chip" is well served by Nikon's DX lenses, but this 21st-century camera is also compatible with nearly every F-mount optic made since 1959.

Strengths inherited from the D2X include the D200's sturdy magnesium-alloy chassis and full weather sealing, the latter not found in other cameras in this price range. The new model's appearance, feel, and traditional control layout also mirror the D2X, but a 25 percent reduction in height and weight makes it more portable. Its oversized top-deck information panel and sharp 2.5-inch color LCD screen are easy to read, the latter offering a superwide viewing angle. Similarly, the camera's viewfinder is one of the biggest in its class.

The D200 is extremely responsive, with near-instant start-up, minimal shutter delay, and very brief mirror blackout. Its maximum 5fps shooting speed is just shy of the D2X's standard 5.3fps. The camera lacks its pro sibling's 8fps High Speed Crop mode but bests the D2X in continuous shooting capacity. Its 11-point AF system is as fast and accurate as the one in Canon's EOS 30D, but more advanced in terms of configuration options.

The new model even gets the D2X's superb menu system and encyclopedic customization. Other standout features include its easily accessed mirror lockup; interval timer; textual captioning function; and control of wireless i-TTL strobes from its pop-up flash. The camera is a true system machine, compatible with third-party GPS receivers as well as the new Nikon WT-3 wireless transmitter and optional MB-D200 battery grip.

We found the D200's image quality to be superb—only slightly less detailed than that of the \$2,700 Canon EOS 5D (see page 68) and the \$4,000-plus D2X, with slightly less graininess than the latter. (It requires stronger noise reduction, whether in-camera or using RAW software, to compete with the EOS 5D or EOS 30D at high ISOs.) In our May/June issue, we said that the Nikon D200 was the best midpriced D-SLR you could buy—but that readers should check this issue to see if it held on to that lead. It did.



AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006

**BEST
BUY**



Canon EOS 30D

Had Nikon not claimed the category with its D200, Canon's EOS 30D would be our choice for Advanced D-SLR. Buff successor to the EOS 20D, the 30D builds on that camera's strengths while borrowing features from its full-frame sibling, the EOS 5D. At \$300 less than the D200, the EOS 30D gives Nikon a run for its money. Its shooting speed is 5fps, same as the Nikon D200. The EOS 30D's burst depth is comparable, at about 50 Large/Fine JPEGs. And we think its autofocus is faster in low light. Despite its two-megapixel disadvantage, the 30D actually does a better job of controlling noise. Add that to Canon's numerical lead in IS lenses and you have a top-notch tool for low-light shooting. The 30D has a tough magnesium-alloy body, though it's not weatherproofed like the D200's; an ample 2.5-inch LCD screen with a 170-degree viewing angle; a 3.5 percent spot meter; improved long-exposure noise reduction; and an optional wireless file transmitter and battery grip. If the Nikon D200 is refined, the Canon EOS 30D is a scrappy challenger.

CANON EOS 30D

8.2
MEGAPIXELS/
CMOS IMAGE
SENSOR

1.6X
FOV
CROP

2.5 INCH
LCD SCREEN
ABOUT
\$1,400

Made to order for fast action and low-light photography, this serious upgrade of the Canon EOS 20D costs hundreds less than the rival Nikon D200.

ADVANCED D-SLRs

OTHER TOP CAMERAS



Panasonic Lumix DMC-L1

Though Olympus gets credit for creating the world's first D-SLR with a "live view" LCD screen, this close second arrives with advanced advantages—and the unmistakable look and feel of a Leica rangefinder. Panasonic's top Lumix is cosmetically and mechanically distinct from the Olympus E-330, but both models share core components, the result of one of the new alliances between camera companies and consumer electronics colossi. Panasonic developed the unique 7.4-megapixel Live MOS chip employed by both cameras. Olympus contributed both the sideways porro finder, which is why the L1 can affect its M-like flat top, and the valuable Supersonic Wave filter, which shakes dust off the image sensor. But unlike the E-330, which for normal shooting gets its live view from a small second sensor, the Lumix relies on the Live MOS chip to create a crisper, more detailed image on the LCD. (The L1's screen is fixed, not articulated as it is in the E-330.) And the DMC-L1 is sharp in every other way, with premium build quality and traditional, manual-style controls.

PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-L1

7.5
MEGAPIXELS/
LIVE MOS
IMAGE SENSOR

2X
FOV
CROP

2.5 INCH
LCD SCREEN
4/3 MOUNT

Kissing cousin to the Olympus EVOLT E-330, Panasonic's first D-SLR has the look and feel of an M-series Leica rangefinder—with a live LCD screen.

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PROFESSIONAL D-SLRs

CAMERA OF THE YEAR

Our professional camera of the year is conventional in one familiar sense: Its image sensor is the size of an old-fashioned 35mm frame. But that's what sets it apart from almost all other D-SLRs—models with sub-35mm sensors that narrow a lens's expected angle of view. The big chip gives you the full wide-angle goodness of the largest AF lens selection in the optical world, at a price that redefines the category.

12.7 CMOS
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

**CANON
EOS 5D**

FULL FRAME
(NO FOV CROP)

2.5 INCH LCD
SCREEN

ABOUT **\$2,700**

A full-frame, 35mm-sized image sensor makes its first appearance in an affordable, mid-sized digital SLR. The bigger chip gives you exceptionally low image noise, a huge optical viewfinder, and the expected angle of view from your made-for-35mm Canon-mount lenses.

Most digital SLRs with 35mm-sized sensors have either never made it beyond prototype or gone the way of the dinosaur. Large, lumbering, and beyond the reach of middle-class photographers, they had been reduced to a single species—Canon's own EOS-1Ds Mark II—until the **Canon EOS 5D** came along. The 12.7-megapixel EOS 5D not only halves the size and weight of its full-frame sibling, but costs way less than half its price. It's significantly cheaper, in fact, than its only twelve-megapixel competitor, Nikon's professional D2X, a camera with a physically smaller, APS-C-sized image sensor. Affordability is relative, but Canon's midsize EOS 5D is arguably the first full-frame professional digital SLR for the rest of us.

What's the advantage of a "full-frame" D-SLR? We can think of three. First, when you put a Canon-mount lens on the camera, it produces the exact same angle of view as when that lens is used on a 35mm camera. The image isn't "cropped" the way it is by D-SLRs having smaller sensors, which in effect increase your working focal length by a factor ranging from 1.3X to 2X, depending on the model. This is especially valuable on the short end of the focal length range, allowing wide-angle lenses

and zoom settings to retain their expansive coverage.

The full-frame chip's second advantage is image quality. Its sheer resolution permits tack-sharp prints of 20x30 inches and beyond. But because the bigger chip accommodates bigger pixels without reducing resolution, and bigger pixels gather light more efficiently, 5D images have extremely low noise (the digital equivalent of "grain") even at equivalent-speed settings as high as ISO 3200. This makes the camera ideally suited to shooting in low existing light. Its output is actually smoother at high sensitivities than that from the costlier 1Ds Mark II.

Finally, because the 5D's viewfinder doesn't have to be "cropped" the way it does with D-SLRs having smaller-than-35mm sensors, it's 50 to 80 percent larger in area. This makes framing and focusing, manual included, much easier.

Among the 5D's other ample virtues are a very large continuous shooting buffer (17 RAW and 60 JPEG frames, at 3fps); a fast nine-point AF system; and a true 3.5 percent spot meter. We found the camera solid, comfortable, and fast handling—yet quieter and less obtrusive than its professional rivals. All in all, it reminds us of how shooting 35mm used to feel.



ISO 100 to 1600 in thirds of stops, plus 50 and 3200

12.72-megapixel, full-frame (24x36mm) CMOS image sensor

Huge optical view-finder with 96 percent coverage, 0.71X magnification

Six shooting modes plus C mode for saving and recalling preferred settings

Magnesium-alloy body (similar to EOS 30D)

Canon EF lenses produce same angle of view as with EOS 35mm SLR bodies



E-TTL II flash metering plus wireless multi-strobe control

Nine-point AF with six extra "invisible" points for better motion tracking

Continuous 3fps shooting in bursts of up to 60 Large/Fine JPEG or 17 RAW images

Dedicated direct printing button

Six adjustable, three user-defined Picture Styles

Hi-Speed USB 2.0, video-out, PC socket, remote release

35-zone multi-segment, centerweighted, eight percent partial, and 3.5 percent spot metering

Accepts BG-E4 battery grip, WFT-E1a wireless file transmitter

2.5-inch, 230,000 pixel LCD with 170-degree viewing angle

Saves images on CompactFlash Type I/II memory cards, plus Microdrives

AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006

OTHER TOP CAMERAS

PROFESSIONAL D-SLRs



Nikon D2X

Why is Nikon's professional D2X, last year's cover camera, one of this year's top picks too? Because it remains the only D-SLR to combine rapid-fire shooting and extreme resolution in a single, nearly indestructible camera body. A key reason is Nikon's unique High Speed Crop mode: With the push of a button, the D2X shifts from its full 12.2-megapixel resolution and standard 5fps to 6.9 megapixels and a withering firing speed of 8fps. The D2X "crops" the frame to do this, boosting the camera's standard 1.5X FOV crop to 2X, giving teles extra reach. The D2X now faces lower-priced competitors with similar resolving power, but it still boasts faster framing, more sensitive AF, better white balance system, superior ruggedness, and an integrated vertical grip. These features come at a premium, but many pros consider it money well spent.

NIKON D2X

12.4 CMOS
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

1.5X **2.5**
FOV LCD
CROP INCH
SCREEN

Newcomers offer comparable image quality for less money, but this technological heavyweight retains its title as the fastest and most versatile high-resolution digital SLR.

ABOUT **\$4,000**

10 CCD
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

1.4X FOV
CROP

1.8 INCH LCD
SCREEN

This unique digital back lets you shoot either pixels or film, using a single Leica 35mm body and some of the best lenses ever made.

ABOUT **\$9,000**

LEICA DIGITAL-MODUL-R/ LEICA R9

Leica Digital-Modul-R/ Leica R9

The world's first and only interchangeable digital back for a 35mm SLR system, Leica's Digital-Modul-R (DMR) is the ultimate hedge for photographers who still love film. It works with any Leica R9 or R8, die-cast magnesium film cameras incorporating minimalist, all-mechanical controls that operate with utter precision. Converting to digital is as simple as removing the camera's hinged back, attaching the DMR and power unit, and inserting an SD card. The resulting hybrid is comparable in bulk and weight to a pro-level integral D-SLR, yet with little automation and no autofocus. The payoff is that you can use nearly all Leica R-series manual-focus lenses made since 1965. In image quality, the 9.9-megapixel DMR held up well against our best-of-class 16.6-megapixel Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II test camera—exceedingly sharp, with only a small increase in digital "grain."



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CAMERA OF THE YEAR



HIGH-RES EVFs

Last year we thought high-resolution cameras with electronic viewfinders and non-interchangeable lenses were dead ducks, soon-to-be victims of D-SLR price slashing. Then Sony created the Cyber-shot DSC-R1, a model that bridges the gap between EVFs and D-SLRs. The Sony R1 offers exceptionally low noise, a wide dynamic range, and (unlike most of its competitors) a fast, true wide-angle zoom. Ask yourself: Do you really need inter-

SONY CYBER-SHOT DSC-R1

10.3 CMOS
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

5X ZOOM (24-120MM
EQUIVALENT)

2 INCH LCD MONITOR
(TILT/SWIVEL)

A groundbreaking model that combines the convenience of an electronic viewfinder camera with the image quality of a D-SLR.

ABOUT **\$1,000**

Its sheer specs set a new standard for electronic viewfinder (EVF) cameras: ten megapixels of resolution and a top sensitivity of ISO 3200. But what makes the **Sony Cyber-shot DSC-R1** different from all other EVFs is the size of its CMOS image sensor. It's as big as the image sensors in many, if not most, digital SLRs—and over five times the area of the CCD sensor in Sony's previous top EVF, the eight-megapixel Cyber-shot DSC-F828.

Why would you need five times more space to accommodate 25 percent more pixels? Resolution isn't the reason. A larger sensor permits larger pixels, and larger pixels produce images with lower noise at a given ISO, all else being equal. In fact, we found that compared to other EVF models, the new Cyber-shot provides about two stops of additional, usable sensitivity. In practice, this means you can shoot handheld in much lower light levels without an EVF camera's usual trade-off in image quality.

Opting for the bigger chip meant Sony had to make a slightly bigger camera body, and, more significantly, a lens with longer actual focal lengths to produce comparable angles of view. The R1's quick-focusing 5X Zeiss zoom gives the equivalent of 24-120mm (and a fast f/2.8-4.8) on a 35mm camera. Many EVF models offer more telephoto power, but Sony smartly chose to limit the long end of the focal-length range to keep the lens compact.

Like any EVF, the Cyber-shot R1 displays a "live" image on its LCD monitor, which lies flat on top of the camera, hinged at the back—as if low-angle composition and waist-level shooting were its first priority. (You flip up the screen for arm's-length composition.) Once you're ready to shoot, so is the R1: Its shutter response is quick and quiet, with very little delay between shots. To us, that sounds like a digital SLR.



Fujifilm FinePix S9000 At nine megapixels, Fuji's top FinePix has the highest resolution of any EVF model except our camera of the year—just a megapixel shy of the Sony's. The S9000 is less expensive, though, in part because its image sensor is much smaller. But isn't packing almost as many pixels into a much smaller chip asking for noise? No. The S9000 mitigates this consequence with proprietary image processing that separates noise from actual image information. At each ISO setting, the S9000 produces far less noise than a conventional eight-megapixel model. Depending on the subject, ISO 400 images from the S9000 were as "clean" as the competition's ISO 100 or 200 pictures. The camera's 10.7X manual zoom offers an almost ideal 35mm-equivalent range from 28mm wide-angle to 300mm telephoto. This full-featured camera even shoots in RAW mode. About \$600.

Kodak EasyShare P880 This eight-megapixel model doesn't really need a hump in the middle of its top deck because it has no pentaprism, just a very good 237,000-pixel electronic viewfinder. Since most photographers will probably compose with the camera's huge 2.5-inch LCD screen, we think Kodak is suggesting that this top-of-the-line model can fill in for a digital SLR. Its 24-140mm focal-length range provides wide-angle coverage for which you'd ordinarily need a D-SLR and its interchangeable lenses. And it has a full, SLR-style range of exposure modes, a flash hotshoe, and the ability to shoot in RAW mode. But the camera's most valuable single feature may be optical image stabilization, which lets you safely shoot handheld at much slower shutter speeds—taking you further into the low-light realm than any other model in this class. About \$500.



Samsung Digimax Pro815 In the ongoing "my LCD is bigger than your LCD" fight, Samsung's Pro815 is the champ—at least in a real man's camera. Though the top Digimax is a hefty, SLR-shaped model, its back is dominated by a 3.5-inch LCD that makes onscreen viewing and composition easier and more detailed than ever. Other features are also super-sized, including a 15X optical zoom (the staggering equivalent of 28-420mm in 35mm); eight-megapixel image capture; full-VGA video (30fps, with stereo sound); menu type size (easily readable at arm's length); and battery stamina (a Li-ion rechargeable that's rated at 450 shots a charge). The Pro815's macro capability permits focusing to about an inch in front of the lens, while its spotmeter can be coupled to an AF point almost anywhere on the screen image. And as if the big LCD and eye-piece EVF weren't enough, there's a tiny, one-inch auxiliary monitor on the camera's top deck that lets you compose from low angles or above the crowd. About \$750.



**OTHER TOP
CAMERAS**
**HIGH-RES
EVFs**

AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006

CAMERA OF THE YEAR

AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006



SUPERZOOM EVFs

A few years back this class of digital camera was a novelty: one- or two-megapixel models with tiny CCDs and compact electronic viewfinders that made zooming possible to 10X or better. Today's best superzoom EVFs combine six megapixels or more with advanced metering, exposure, and AF options. Many have movie capability, and most are equipped with image stabilization—a necessity for sharp handheld shots at these cameras' 400mm-plus focal lengths.

**SONY
CYBER-SHOT
DSC-H5**

7.2 CCD
MEGAPIXEL IMAGE
SENSOR

12X ZOOM (36-432MM
EQUIVALENT)

3.0 INCH LCD
MONITOR

A top-of-the-class combination of resolution, LCD size, and zoom power, with image stabilization to make the most of them.

ABOUT **\$450**

Sony's flagship superzoom is more than a bundle of specs. Yes, it has the highest resolution (7.2 megapixels), the biggest LCD monitor (three inches), and one of the fastest zooms in its class, a 36-432mm (35mm equivalent) f/2.8-3.7 Zeiss Vario-Tessar. But the experience that Sony has gained over several generations of H-series superzooms really shows in this camera's details. The **Sony Cyber-shot DSC-H5** has exceptional ergonomics, its shutter button, zoom toggle, and mode dial all well placed. You don't even have to take your eye off the subject to adjust the mode dial, because a "virtual dial" appears in the EVF or on the monitor to show you your setting as you turn it. Meanwhile the H5's Function Guide provides an onscreen explanation of modes as you choose them. And when you're ready, you can turn off the guide.

Many superzoom EVFs offer equivalent-speed settings only up to ISO 400. Given the smaller maximum aperture these cameras set when you're zoomed way in, this increases the chance that camera shake will blur the image. But the H5 has an unusually high top sensitivity of ISO 1000. That extra stop and a third combines with Sony's Steady Shot image stabilizer to deliver more consistent sharpness in the H5's pictures. Steady Shot can be used in continuous mode, which shows you its smoothing effect in the viewfinder and on the LCD screen, or "shoot only," which engages the system only at the moment of exposure to conserve power. (We prefer continuous because it helps us judge our steadiness and makes composition more precise.) But stabilization isn't limited to stills: It can be used to smooth out the H5's 30fps, VGA-quality movies, which you can shoot up to the capacity of its Memory Stick Duo cards.

Olympus Stylus SP-500 UZ

This full-featured electronic viewfinder-equipped digicam packs an ample six-megapixel sensor, a 10X zoom (38-380mm equivalent), and a big 2.5-inch color LCD into its lightweight, diminutive body. Yet the SP-500 UZ costs significantly less than similar five-megapixel competitors. It gives you 27 different shooting modes, including full manual; three different metering patterns, including spot; and, impressively, the ability to shoot RAW files, lacking in its direct competitors. The camera takes xD-Picture Card media and is powered by four AA batteries. The only things you'll miss are full-

VGA, 640x480 video (it does 320x240 only) and image stabilization, but those features would add to its nice, low price. About \$330.



Kodak EasyShare Z612

Despite its fast 12X Schneider Variogon zoom, the equivalent of 35-420mm in 35mm, this 6.1-megapixel model is astonishingly light—about 12 ounces, with batteries. That includes optical image stabilization, which works for both stills and movies. The latter can be shot in full VGA at 30fps, with stereo sound and live zooming. Whether you're shooting stills or movies, it helps that the camera's 2.5-inch LCD and 202,000-pixel electronic viewfinder are unusually fine grained. Powering it all is a Li-ion battery that can be replaced with AAs or CRV3 lithiums when you can't recharge. About \$400.

Canon PowerShot S3 IS

This model might turn you into a filmmaker. Not only can it shoot full-VGA movies at 30fps but it also records in stereo sound using two tiny microphones above the lens. You can even speed up its framing rate to 60fps for smoother recording of high-speed motion (at 320x240 pixels). And you can do all this as you zoom throughout the range of its 36-432mm (35mm equivalent) f/2.7-3.5 lens. For stills, the H5 captures at six megapixels at sensitivities up to an above-average ISO 800. Its optical IS steadies everything but you, working in continuous or shoot-only modes, and can be set to panning mode for sharp shots of moving objects with smooth background blur. It will even stabilize your movies. About \$500.



Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ7

It may look like the world's smallest SLR, but this ultralight six-megapixel model is an EVF in the Panasonic mold, with a fast 36-432mm (35mm equivalent) zoom and highly effective optical image stabilization. The FZ7's creative features include panning mode, which stabilizes the image only in the up-down axis while favoring slower shutter speeds, for panned images with a smooth blurred background. Other modes are just for fun, like flip animation, which lets you assemble herky-jerky videos from a series of still photos. The FZ7 also captures full-VGA movies at 30fps with stabilization, although you can't zoom while shooting. Its Li-ion rechargeable battery system is one of the best in the superzoom EVF class. About \$350.



OTHER TOP CAMERAS

SUPER-ZOOM EVFs

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CAMERA OF THE YEAR

When you can get a digital point-and-shoot that's the size of a deck of playing cards (minus 26 cards), why would you buy a standard-sized compact camera? For one thing, its bigger, more ergonomic body is easier to hold steady—increasing image sharpness. It often has a more generous zoom range than an ultrathin model. Its lens is likely to be faster too, making for more adept low-light and action shooting. And for a given set of features, a standard compact is simply less expensive.

DIGITAL COMPACTS

**FUJIFILM
FINEPIX
E900**

9.0 CCD
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

4X ZOOM (32-128MM
EQUIVALENT)

2.0 INCH LCD
MONITOR

This high-res powerhouse delivers the image quality of a D-SLR at a point-and-shoot price.

ABOUT **\$325**

Fuji's top compact follows the time-honored hot-rodder formula: Take a big, powerful engine and transplant it into a small, unlikely body. The big engine is the nine-megapixel CCD from the Fujifilm FinePix S9000, one of our top EVF models (see page 73). The body is a satin-black-and-silver point-and-shoot that slips easily into a coat pocket. The **Fujifilm FinePix E900's** 4X zoom, a 32-128mm (35mm equivalent) f/2.8-5.6, is both wider and longer than the usual point-and-shoot lens, and pretty fast at its shorter focal lengths. Its superior sharpness and the camera's top-of-class megapixel count yield image resolution of more than 1,800 lines per inch, as tested by our sister magazine, *Popular Photography*. That's superior to a number of current D-SLRs.

Meanwhile, the E900 does a remarkable job of controlling digital noise, usually the bane of compact cameras with small sensors. At its top speed of ISO 800, low noise makes the camera genuinely usable in dim light. Other similarities to the S9000 include fast start-up, capture, and write-to-card speeds, with hardly any noticeable shutter lag—also unusual in a compact. That performance is complemented by such advanced features as easy-to-use manual exposure control, RAW capture, a live histogram, and a movable AF point. The E900 even shoots VGA video at 30fps. Given the capabilities of this little camera, D-SLR users may be tempted to leave "the good camera" at home.



Nikon Coolpix P3

It may look no different than its cool, compact siblings, but this new model packs a surprise: 802.11b/g LAN support, more commonly known as Wi-Fi. The Coolpix P3 lets you send shots wirelessly to a nearby Wi-Fi-enabled computer; they can even be transmitted directly to Wi-Fi-enabled, PictBridge-compatible printers. The P3's image quality is excellent, thanks to its eight-megapixel sensor and Vibration Reduction (VR), a technology originally developed for Nikon SLR lenses. The P3's zoom is equal, in 35mm, to 36-126mm; images are displayed on a crisp 2.5-inch LCD monitor. About \$450.

Canon PowerShot S80

A case study in how much can be stuffed into a standard compact, the Canon S80's specs read more like those of a digital SLR—starting with eight megapixel capture, short shutter lag, and a 28-100mm f/2.8-5.3 (equivalent) aspherical zoom. But some of its features are found on no D-SLR. These include the ability to record movies in XGA resolution (1,024x768 pixels) at 15fps and in-camera fixes such as skin-tone adjustment, single-color saturation control, and color swaps. All that folds up into a robust metal clamshell body with a big 2.5-inch LCD. About \$430.



Leica D-Lux 2 True to Leica tradition, this eight-megapixel model is well suited to candid photography. Its 4X DC Vario-Elmarit zoom, equivalent to 28-112mm f/2.8-4.9, offers both wide-angle and moderate-tele shooting. In addition to its AE modes, the D-Lux 2 lets you set f-stop and shutter speed manually—control seldom found in compacts. Most unusual, though, is a choice of three aspect ratios: wide-screen 16:9, 35mm-style 3:2, or standard 4:3. The 2.5-inch LCD is masked to show your choice. About \$750.

DIGITAL COMPACTS



OTHER TOP CAMERAS



Olympus Stylus 810

Olympus has made a technological habit of packing advanced features into very small cameras. This model continues that custom, offering eight-megapixel image quality and a 2.5-inch LCD in a body that fits into the palm of your hand. Internal seals protect the weatherproof Stylus 810 from moisture and dust for safe shooting in the rain, on the slopes, or at the beach. Its respectably fast 35-105mm f/2.8-4.7 (equivalent) zoom is supported by sensitivities of up to ISO 1600. Even at lower settings, camera shake is unlikely to blur your pictures because the Stylus 810 incorporates optical image stabilization. About \$440.

HP Photosmart R927

Though it's not ultrathin, HP's eight-megapixel contender is smaller than the proverbial deck of cards. Yet it incorporates a three-inch LCD that's huge by compact standards. The screen is large enough for comfortable composition at arm's length, sometimes a challenge with smaller LCDs. The R927 has a sharp 3X zoom that's equivalent to a classic 35-105mm in 35mm, and it offers extensive image-enhancement technologies, including "adaptive lighting" to increase highlight and shadow detail. About \$400.



**BEST
BUY**

CAMERA OF THE YEAR



ULTRATHIN COMPACTS

As this issue was about to go to press, Kodak showed us a camera that redefines what a compact can be. Cosmetically, the EasyShare V610 is the fraternal twin to our ultrathin compact of the year, the Kodak EasyShare V570—and while it's not quite as slim, it *is* the world's smallest camera with 10X optical zooming. (See Imaging Essentials, page 100.) The V610's dual-lens technology is brilliant, but for real-world shooting, we prefer the V570's blend of fixed wide-angle and traditional zooming.

KODAK EASYSHARE V570

5.0 CCD
MEGAPIXELS IMAGE
SENSOR

FIXED SUPERWIDE (23MM)
AND **3X** ZOOM (39-117MM
EQUIVALENT)

2.5 INCH LCD
MONITOR

Despite its high style, form follows function—and provides wide-angle coverage—in this shirt-pocket point-and-shoot.

ABOUT **\$400**

You're not seeing double. There are *two* Schneider lenses on the **Kodak EasyShare V570**, part of an innovative design that builds an unusually wide focal-length range into a very small, thin camera. The lower lens is a conventional 3X zoom, the equivalent of 39-117mm f/3.9-4.4 in 35mm. The upper lens has a fixed focal length that's about equal, in 35mm, to a superwide 23mm f/2.8. Neither of these lenses extends from the camera when you turn it on, or when you zoom, because its optics are folded like a sideways periscope into the body. And each lens has its own five-megapixel CCD image sensor. When you want to go wider or longer, you just hold down the zoom rocker and the camera shifts back and forth between the lenses.

Ingenious optics aside, the V570 is a high-style camera. Even its dual-lens design is reminiscent of a vintage twin-lens reflex camera. Squared-off corners, a dot-patterned silver back plate, and a matte-silver sliding lens cover pick up the retro look; the supplied dock even looks like the flying saucer in *Forbidden Planet*. In every way that counts, however, the V570 is fully modern. Most of the camera back is consumed by a 2.5-inch, 230,000-pixel LCD. Built-in software automatically corrects distortion to maximize the quality of wide-angle shots, but you can turn it off for more of a fisheye effect. And panorama mode stitches three shots together for a 180-degree angle of view.

Pentax Optio T10

If you put a very large LCD monitor into a very small camera, where do you fit the controls? This six-megapixel model offers a clever and increasingly popular solution: Its jumbo three-inch LCD is touch sensitive. In addition to composing on the screen, you use it to select items from control menus with a PDA-style pen. This minimizes the need for real buttons. You can also use the pen to "draw" on your photographs—useful for making notes or creating sketch-like effects without resorting to a computer. How does the T10 stay so thin? When it retracts into its 19.5-millimeter, aluminum-alloy body, groups of elements slide sideways, allowing them to be stored with less space between them. About \$350.



Nikon Coolpix S6

This six-megapixel model is trendy in four ways: It has Wi-Fi capability; a huge LCD monitor; a zoom lens that stays flush with the front of the camera; and an ultraslim body. As with the Coolpix P3, its Wi-Fi sibling, the S6 lets you transmit images wirelessly to a nearby Wi-Fi-enabled computer, either a shot at a time or in batches. Its three-inch LCD is impressively sharp, thanks to 230,000 pixels; the 3X zoom is a bit more wide-angle than you'll find in most compacts, about equal to 35-105mm f/3.0-5.4. And how thin is it? Just 21 millimeters. About \$450.

Casio Exilim EX-Z600

Exilim cameras are always modish, and in more ways than one. Take the six-megapixel EX-Z600. It propagates the line's metal-bodied good looks, and it features a record-setting 33 Best Shot modes. One of these is specifically designed for shooting pictures of stuff you want to sell on eBay: It sets the camera for close focusing and reduces resolution to two megapixels (making the file easier to upload). But the Z600 has its serious side, found in its fully retracting 3X, 38-114mm-equivalent zoom and its extrabright 2.7-inch LCD monitor, which is easier to see in daylight than most. (A useful thing, given that the Z600 has no optical viewfinder.) Its Li-ion rechargeable battery is serious, too, rated for 550 shots a charge. About \$275.



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T9

The credit card-sized T9 takes a dual approach to enhancing image sharpness. Its optical image stabilizer counteracts movement on the part of the photographer, while sensitivities up to ISO 640 permit higher shutter speeds that freeze subject motion more effectively. The camera back is almost filled with a 2.5-inch, 230,000-pixel LCD monitor, but there's still room for a simple control layout that includes a rocker switch for the T9's 3X, internally zooming Vario-Tessar, the equivalent of 38-114mm. A sliding panel protects the lens and turns the camera on and off. About \$450.



OTHER TOP CAMERAS



ULTRATHIN COMPACTS

Samsung Digimax i6

As digital cameras get thinner, they can be harder to hold steady, increasing the risk of unsharp pictures. Though this model is just 18.5 millimeters deep, its designers dealt with the problem in two clever ways. First, they incorporated Samsung's software-based Advanced Shake Reduction technology into the camera. Second, they put a curve in the body that serves as an effective hand grip. The six-megapixel i6 houses an internally zooming 3X lens and a bright 2.5-inch LCD. This small wonder even doubles as a portable media player, shooting VGA movies and playing MP3 music files. About \$300.





Nokia N93 When you set it up in landscape mode to view its 2.4-inch LCD, it looks like a miniature laptop. Swing out the screen to shoot VGA video at 30fps and it looks like a tiny camcorder. But the Nokia N93's gymnastics don't end there: Flip it open and rotate its two halves 90 degrees and you can take horizontal photographs rather than the cellphone-standard verticals. Good ones too, because the camera in this 6.3-ounce GSM model offers 3.2-megapixel resolution and a nearly-3X Zeiss *optical* AF zoom, about 34-94mm in 35mm. Files are saved to a miniSD card, where you can also keep tunes for the N93's MP3 player. In addition to USB, Bluetooth, and IrDA, there's AV-out for TV display. PictBridge support lets you send photos to a printer. And built-in photo blogging benefits from the N93's fast Internet access.

CAMERA CELLPHONES



You're too young to remember the 1950s fad of stuffing as many people as possible into a phone booth, but that's sort of what consumer electronics makers are doing these days to phones themselves. Flip open a cutting-edge cellphone and out tumble televisions, stereos, Internet-connected PDAs—and cameras. The models we like best offer three-megapixel resolution, autofocus, and even optical zooming. Oh, and photo-blogging tools.



LG 8300 This 3.9-ounce CDMA flip phone incorporates a 1.3-megapixel camera with both built-in flash and 8X digital zooming. It features a zippy new Flash-based user interface; photos and video clips are saved to its microSD card, along with music files that you can listen to on Bluetooth stereo headphones. You can also download music wirelessly and stream video to the 8300; activate its GPS functions while you're on a call; and use its fast Internet connection to access the Web. Verizon customers will be busy.



PalmOne Treo 700w If you want a camera cellphone that functions more like your computer, consider this 6.4-ounce Treo. A CDMA model, it offers 1.3-megapixel capture and can shoot video clips as well. But it also provides everything you'd expect from a PDA, including a QWERTY keyboard and big touchscreen. The Treo 700w accepts compact camera-standard SD cards, and it also offers Bluetooth connectivity, video streaming and fast Internet access, a music player, and good old FM radio.



Motorola i580 Built to ride shotgun in your Humvee, this 4.9-ounce iDEN flip phone meets "strict military specifications for blowing rain, dust, shock and vibration," says Motorola. You can use its 1.3-megapixel camera to shoot photos or video clips of the maelstrom, save them to a microSD card, determine your coordinates with the i580's GPS, then call in air support with its push-to-talk functionality. For less action-packed occasions, the i580 offers MP3 playback and wireless Bluetooth connectivity.

AMERICAN PHOTO

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Nokia N73

Like its sibling Nokia N93, this GSM camera cellphone offers 3.2-megapixel resolution, a Zeiss autofocus lens, built-in flash, and a 2.4-inch LCD. The main difference is that the lens doesn't zoom optically (though it goes to 20X digitally) and the LCD stays put on a four-ounce, bar-style body. This lighter-weight model is full of other cutting-edge features, though, including a stereo multimedia player, photo blogging support, streaming video, and FM radio. Those abilities are aided by fast data transfer, as are PDA functions such as e-mail with attachments. You can save up to a gigabyte of files on a miniSD card, and connect to other devices via Bluetooth, IrDA, and USB. You even get a copy of Adobe Photoshop Album 3.0 Starter Edition.



Sony Ericsson K790a A Sony Cyber-shot camera and a GSM bar-style phone rolled into one 4.1-ounce device with a two-inch LCD, this model offers a wealth of imaging features. Its 3.2-megapixel resolution is backed up by autofocus and electronic image stabilization. There's also a built-in flash and PictBridge support for direct output to a compatible printer; Bluetooth and IrDA let you connect to other devices and accessories. Sony's BestPic mode snaps a series with one click and lets you save the best shot to a Memory Stick Micro. And you can shoot video. The K790a doubles as a music player and FM radio; it plays tunes while you're surfing the Web or uploading pictures to a photo blog. Its non-connected music-only mode even lets you listen on a plane.

CAMERA CELLPHONES



Sony Ericsson W810i

The W in this 3.6-ounce GSM phone's model number stands for Walkman, and it lives up to its name with a full-fledged music player, an FM radio, and a music-only mode for in-flight listening. But it also incorporates a two-megapixel autofocus camera with 4X digital zooming, captures video, and sports a 1.9-inch LCD. The W810i has an optional snap-on flash, and it comes with a 512MB Memory Stick Pro Duo. It also offers fast Internet access, e-mailing, and multiple connectivity.

Samsung SGH-ZX20

The fastest camera phone in the West when it comes to Internet and data connectivity, this GSM flip phone incorporates a 1.3-megapixel camera with a 180-degree rotating lens module (for shooting yourself) and a built-in flash. The ZX20's fast HSDPA data transfer and built-in media player make for smooth music and video streaming; you can surf the Web and e-mail photos while you're making a call. Pictures can be saved to microSD cards and sent by wireless Bluetooth to nearby devices.

Sanyo MM-7500

A sort of personal digital jester, this four-ounce CDMA flip phone offers on-demand amusement. It can stream both TV and radio, download music wirelessly for stereo playback, and fill in as a modem if your laptop can't connect. Most entertaining, it includes a camera—one with 1.3-megapixel resolution, built-in flash and video light, 20X digital zoom, macro mode, and PictBridge direct-to-printer support. The MM-7500's main 1.8-inch LCD is supplemented by an external one-inch color screen.

Nokia N80

A GSM phone with a 4.7-ounce stainless-steel-and-chrome body, the N80 has a sliding design and a 2.1-inch LCD. Its three-megapixel camera is well equipped, with a flash, macro mode, and 352x240 video. There are even image editing tools. It saves photos to miniSD cards, which also hold music you can play back in stereo. There's an FM radio, and video streaming and e-mail are facilitated by fast data transfer. Other connectivity features include USB 2.0 and both IrDA and Bluetooth wireless capabilities.

Kyocera K822

Equipped with a 1.3-megapixel camera that offers 5X digital zooming and video capture, this four-ounce CDMA flip phone doubles as a stereo music player and FM radio. Supplementing the K822's 1.9-inch interior LCD is a small screen on its glossy black exterior, where you'll also find (get this) a pair of stereo speakers. Photos and tunes can be saved to microSD memory cards, and the upcoming model (available this fall) will offer both Bluetooth and IrDA connectivity along with its fast Internet access.

1

Nikon 18-200mm
f/3.5-5.6G
IF-ED
AF-S DX
VR II Zoom-
Nikkor



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2

Sigma 150mm
f/2.8 APO
Macro DG HSM



LENSES

This year our favorite new lenses are evenly split—between those designed for full-frame 35mm coverage and optics specifically made for the smaller-than-35mm chips found in all but a couple of digital SLRs. Does this mean that 35mm film photography is alive and well? Or that lens makers are expecting us to clamor for full-frame digital SLRs?

4

Zeiss ZF
Planar T*
85mm
f/1.4 (for
Nikon F
mount)



3

Pentax DA
Fisheye 10-
17mm f/3.5-
4.5 ED [IF]



BEST
BUY

1 NIKON 18-200MM f/3.5-5.6G IF-ED AF-S DX VR II

Though not a standard zoom by any stretch, this new optic is featured on one of our cover cameras, the Nikon D200. That's because it's compact enough to keep on your Nikon D-SLR for everyday shooting—yet it delivers a 35mm-equivalent focal-length range of about 28-300mm. The price of that remarkable range is a relatively small, variable maximum aperture. This would ordinarily limit your ability to shoot in low light, since smaller apertures require slower shutter speeds—speeds often too slow for sharp handheld shooting, especially at the supertele focal lengths this lens offers. But the lens compensates for that with Nikon's VR II technology, second-generation Vibration Reduction that steadies the shot enough for handheld pictures at shutter speeds up to *four* stops slower than you'd otherwise need, as opposed to the three stops of first-generation VR lenses. About \$750.

2 SIGMA 150MM f/2.8 APO MACRO DG HSM

The usual macro focal lengths (50mm, 60mm, 100mm, and 105mm in 35mm) don't cut it for many photographers. They prefer a longer lens for two reasons: It provides more working distance between the camera and a small subject; and its narrower angle of view gives you a smoother, less mottled background to set off your subject. Though this new Sigma macro delivers its nominal focal length on a 35mm or full-frame D-SLR, it produces the equivalent of 225mm or 240mm on a Nikon or Canon D-SLR with an APS-C-sized image sensor. About \$600.

3 PENTAX DA FISHEYE 10-17MM f/3.5-4.5 ED [IF]

Since it's designed for the smaller-than-35mm image sensor in Pentax D-SLRs, this unique fisheye can get by with a smaller image circle—and with reduced size, weight, and cost. Yet with *zooming*: At 10mm it delivers the 180 degrees you'd expect from a full-frame fisheye, but zoom to 17mm and you get a less curvy 100 degrees. Closest focusing is 5.5 inches—a good thing, since you'll want to get really close. About \$400.

4 ZEISS ZF PLANAR T* 85MM f/1.4

Zeiss's new lenses for the Nikon F-mount are a gift to photographers discouraged by Nikon's recent discontinuation of all but a few of its manual-focus optics. The manual-focus ZF series aims to bring the undisputed sharpness of the late Contax line to Nikon users, with enhancements reportedly borrowed from Zeiss motion picture lenses. In addition to the 85mm f/1.4, a lens Nikon will no longer offer in manual focus, a 50mm f/1.4 is now available; a prime wide angle and macro lens are expected. Cheer up, all you Nikon F6 users.

5

Olympus
Zuiko
Digital ED
8mm f/3.5
Full-Frame
Fisheye



**BEST
BUY**

6

Tamron
SP AF
17-50mm
f/2.8 XR
LD Di-II



6

**TAMRON SP AF 17-50MM
f/2.8 XR LD Di-II**

This "standard" zoom for Canon, Nikon, Konica Minolta, and new Sony D-SLRs with APS-C-sized sensors isn't really standard at all: While most such lenses have variable maximum apertures (f/3.5-4.5 is typical), this one stays at a fast f/2.8 throughout its focal-length range, about equivalent to 26-75mm in 35mm. This means you don't end up with slower shutter speeds as you zoom to the longer focal lengths at which camera shake is most damaging. That in turn lets you shoot handheld in lower light. And the compact Tamron focuses *close*—to less than 11 inches throughout its range, for a reproduction ratio of 1:4.5 at 50mm. About \$450.

7

**CANON EF
24-105MM
f/4L USM**

This **smart** constant-aperture zoom trades a stop of speed, compared to Canon's EF 24-70mm f/2.8L USM, for higher magnification and lighter weight—with no

increase in size (it's actually a little shorter) and only a small increase in price. The one-stop loss is more than offset by the 24-105mm's incorporation of Canon's image stabilization (IS), which means you can shoot handheld in light levels *still* two stops lower than possible with the 24-70mm (provided you don't have to freeze subject movement). Because this new pro zoom is not an EF-S lens—it fully covers the area of a 35mm frame—it's well suited to use with the new Canon EOS 5D D-SLR (see page 68), which has a full-frame image sensor. About \$1,200.

10

Nikon
105mm
f/2.8G
ED-IF
AF-S VR
Micro-
Nikkor



7

Canon EF
24-105mm
f/4L USM



9

Canon EF-S
17-55mm
f/2.8 IS USM



5

**OLYMPUS
ZUIKO DIGITAL
ED 8MM f/3.5
FULL-FRAME FISHEYE**

Optics like this make it hard to argue that D-SLR photographers have more limited choices than their 35mm counterparts. A Four Thirds-mount lens for Olympus E-series digital SLRs, it's the equivalent of 35mm's venerable 16mm fisheye. Its controlled distortion combines with a 180-degree angle of view to make for bending and bulging special effects. Put the splash-resistant Zuiko 8mm on an EVOLT E-300 in the new Olympus PT-E01 underwater housing, though, and you can use it to create dramatic near-far compositions without the usual curvature, because the underwater world lacks dry land's straight lines and horizon. About \$700.

AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006



8

Leica D Vario-
Elmarit 14-50mm
f/2.8-3.5 ASPH

8

**LEICA D
VARIO-
ELMARIT
14-50MM f/2.8-
3.5 ASPH**

This **zoom is** a perfect match for Panasonic's new Lumix DMC-L1 D-SLR—a Leica lens for a camera that looks like an M-series rangefinder. Designed for Four Thirds-mount D-SLRs, it's the equivalent of 28-100mm in the 35mm format, and even has built-in image stabilization, smoothing out the L1's "live" LCD. Talk about a nod to tradition, this lens even has a manual aperture ring.

9

**CANON
EF-S
17-55MM
f/2.8 IS USM**

If you have your eye on the Canon EOS 30D, this could be the perfect all-around lens for it. Its focal-length range is equivalent to 27-88mm, with a fast, constant f/2.8 maximum aperture throughout. Optical quality is comparable to that of Canon's premium L-series lenses for full-frame cameras (only with a more manageable price), and is maximized by built-in optical image stabilization. About \$1,180.

10

**NIKON 105MM f/2.8G ED-IF
AF-S VR MICRO-NIKKOR**

Macro photography is usually best served by a tripod, because the closer you shoot the more any image-blurring shake is magnified. But this new Micro-Nikkor recognizes that photographers love to shoot handheld closeups: It incorporates Nikon's Vibration Reduction technology, which lets you use much slower shutter speeds and still get sharp results. This is especially valuable in macro work because it lets you set smaller f-stops, often needed due to the inherently shallow depth of field. Though the lens covers full-frame 35mm, put it on a Nikon D-SLR and it's equivalent to 157.5mm. About \$830.



1
Nikon
R1C1
Wireless
Close-up
Speedlight
System



2
Lowel
Ego
Light

AMERICAN PHOTO
ec
editor's choice 2006



3
Quantum
Qflash
T5d

LIGHTING

Portable flash and fluorescent sources still dominate the market for lighting equipment, perhaps a reflection of digital's increased mobility and improved high-ISO performance. While small-scale product photography is (thanks perhaps to eBay) still the driving force behind fluorescent, at least one of this year's winners brings new power to that cool-burning category.



4
Sunpak
digitLITE
600



5
American
Recorder
Photo
Studio in
a Box

1. Nikon R1C1 Wireless Close-up Speedlight System Macro lighting is akin to casting a spell. Start with a cauldron of hot light or strobe and mix in reflectors, gobos, and other magical ingredients. Think of Nikon's new R1C1 Speedlight System as a new, simplified spell-book. It includes a ring to mount on your lens, two SB-R200 wireless Speedlights to mount on the ring, one SU-800 wireless commander (mounted on the hotshoe) to power them, and some dedicated modifiers. When you need a more powerful spell you can mount up to six more SB-R200s on the lens, grouping them for ratio lighting. About \$680.

2. Lowel Ego Light There are plenty of small fluorescent lighting units available now, all providing a useful daylight color balance and cool operation, but this one is the most versatile of the lot. The Ego Light houses two 5500K-balanced, 27-watt fluorescent lamps, each providing the equivalent of 100 watts of tungsten light, inside a curved white diffuser. The unit can sit on your working tabletop or be mounted on a light stand or tripod with its 1/4-20 screw thread socket. Either way it can be tilted forward for directional control. Well suited to both tight portraiture and product photography, the Ego comes with a white reflector to temper unwanted shadows, though the unit's light is soft and enveloping to begin with. About \$100.

3. Quantum Qflash T5d It may look like a small studio strobe, but Quantum's Qflash is one of photography's most powerful, versatile portable lighting solutions. Its limitation has been a lack of wireless exposure control. The Qflash T5d makes amends. Hook it up to one of Quantum's hot-shoe TTL adapters and you can use the company's FreeWire transmitters and receivers to control multiple T5d units with your brand-name SLR, digital or 35mm. You can even set lighting ratios remotely. Because the system uses radio signals it works through walls and at distances of up to 500 feet. About \$625.

4. Sunpak digitLITE 600 While fluorescent photo lights are cool-burning and efficient, they're often underpowered—usually adequate only for small product work or simple headshots. Larger still lifes and portraits demand more illumination. And you get more from the digitLITE 600 because it packs six 24-watt daylight-balanced fluorescent tubes, the equivalent of 600 watts of tungsten light, into a single 18.5x19.5x2.6-inch unit. The front panel produces a soft, even light that's suitable for different kinds of subjects at greater distances than fluorescent ordinarily permits. An electronic ballast lets you dim the light as needed for closer subjects or ratio control with multiple units; the panel has a swivel mount that fits 5/8-inch light stands. About \$375.

5. American Recorder SIB-200 Photo Studio in a Box As the legion of eBay powersellers continues to grow, there's a booming market for any tool that can make utilitarian items look beautiful. The SIB-200 gives you everything you need to do that. This new, larger version teams a 30-inch-square light tent with a pair of 250-watt tungsten lamps and light stands, plus a tripod with a three-way pan/tilt head. You even get a small carrying case so you can use the setup on location or pack it away until your next auction. About \$300.

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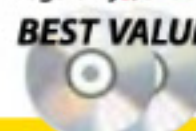
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Sony 8GB Compact Vault

Using a tiny one-inch hard drive instead of the usual static flash memory, Sony's CompactVault gives you massive storage at lower cost than any 8GB CompactFlash memory card. (Make sure your digital camera accepts the thicker CF Type II card profile.) About \$180.



SanDisk 8GB CompactFlash Extreme III

Like its equally rugged Extreme III-series Secure Digital and Memory Stick cousins, SanDisk's latest CompactFlash card offers a speedy 20MB-per-second read/write speed, making it the fastest 8GB card on the market. And since it has the thinner CF Type I form factor, you can use it in a greater variety of digital cameras. About \$430.

**BEST
BUY**

Kingston Technology SD Ultimate

These very fast Secure Digital cards from Kingston Technology offer performance similar to that of competing SanDisk and Lexar offerings but at significantly lower prices—for now. (The price per megabyte of memory cards seems to drop in inverse proportion to the price of gasoline.) About \$65 (1GB SD, which features 133X speed) and \$100 (2GB SD, which features 120X speed).



Lexar 133X WA CompactFlash and Secure Digital

Lexar's Professional Series memory cards get a major speed bump up to 20MB-per-second, and proprietary Write Acceleration (WA) technology enhances their performance in digital SLRs. Image Rescue 2.0 file-retrieval software is included. About \$95 (1GB CF) to \$270 (4GB CF).



STORAGE & DISPLAY

**BEST
BUY**

Iomega ScreenPlay Multimedia Drive

Why no one thought of this before is a mystery. The ScreenPlay looks like a compact 60GB USB 2.0 hard drive, but it includes an AV-out connection and cables so you can hook it up to (almost) any television, receiver, or home entertainment center—bypassing your computer. Using the ScreenPlay's remote and the DVD-style menus it displays on TV, you can play back photo slide shows, MP3 music, and video in several formats. Perfect for travel, it weighs seven ounces and measures 5.2x3x0.7 inches. About \$220.

LaCie Two Big RAID

If you need to store a large number of photographs and have superfast access to them all, consider this curvy, dual-drive external RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks). It's available in 500GB and 1TB (terabyte) versions. When configured with both drives "striped" together, it can reach a blistering 115MB/sec transfer rate via its advanced Serial ATA II interface. That connection requires a PCI-X card and cable, both included. The Two Big's other modes include maximum data safety and maximum capacity. And either drive can be "hot swapped." About \$470 and \$950.

MediaGear Flash DVD with LightScribe

Labeling DVDs can be a hassle. Hand-write on the disk and you risk data corruption; use printable stickers and you risk playback problems; buy a dedicated disk-printing inkjet and you're out the extra cash. This 16X dual-layer DVD burner solves the problem with LightScribe technology, which employs the drive's own internal laser and dedicated software to etch custom labels on LightScribe-compatible disks. (You burn the DVD first, then flip it over to print.) The Flash DVD has slots for nine memory card formats. About \$135 (external) and \$65 (internal).

Memorex TravelLink

Call it a portable data switchboard. This clever sharing device lets you transfer photos, video, music, and text files between two USB mass storage devices (including external hard drives, flash drives, MP3 players, and many digital cameras), between two memory cards (even of differing formats), or between a memory card and a USB device—all without the need for a computer. The TravelLink has an LCD screen with copy, transfer, and delete options, is powered by three AAA batteries, and doubles as an 8-in-1 card reader when connected to your computer. About \$80.

Sony VRD-MC1 DVDirect DVD Recorder

This stand-alone disk burner can be used for simple backup of your digital camera's memory cards, with slots for five different formats. But it also lets you create "slide show" DVDs of pictures on your cards—no computer needed—that can be viewed on home DVD players. There's a two-inch color LCD screen for previewing images, handy for printing directly to a PictBridge-enabled printer. But we confess that our fondness for the VRD-MC1 isn't strictly photographic: We also used it for one-touch burning of home videos to DVD, with chapters and menus. About \$300.



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Digital photographers like to say that correcting shooting defects with software is bad practice, the equivalent of compensating for a flawed negative in the darkroom. These programs make us beg to differ.



Pixmantec RawShooter Premium 2006 This is a powerful alternative to the often slow, clunky RAW conversion software that comes with digital SLRs. It starts with an import feature that quickly gets photos off your memory card, renaming them (if you like) and creating pre-views on the fly. This means you can begin working on images while others are still being downloaded to your computer. Once you've converted the files, RawShooter Premium offers streamlined image editing; it replaces Photoshop's Hue/Saturation sliders, for example, with the Vibrance tool, which boosts or reduces saturation and contrast in a single slider. But what really sets this PC-only program apart is its emphasis on workflow. Shooters who can't resist filling their 8GB memory cards in a single day will appreciate everything from its batch-processing flexibility to the way it lets you save almost anything you do as a custom setting. About \$100 (at pixmantec.com).



Imagenomic Noiseware 4 Digital capture is no different from film in one respect: A higher ISO gives you a "grainier" picture. This noise-reduction program, available in both stand-alone and plug-in versions, lessens that grain and the color irregularities associated with it without sacrificing detail. In noisy pictures shot at ISO 3200 we were able to preserve detail and texture in hair and skin, and even freckles. The Noiseware interface is simple, letting you specify the degree of reduction you want in both luminance and color noise. You can also reduce noise by specific color or by shadow, highlight, or midtone values. If all that control is confusing, presets offer a good starting point. From \$27 to \$70, depending on version (at imagenomic.com).

Vertus Fluid Mask 2.0 Making selections is one of the necessary evils of Photoshop. In order to adjust specific areas of an image, you first have to define those areas for the program. If you want to work on an individual figure, for example, you're in for a lot of work—and good luck if that person has hair. Few plug-ins solve this problem with the speed, accuracy, and automated ease of Fluid Mask 2.0. It divides your picture into like-color segments that resemble puzzle pieces. You simply choose the segments you want to include in your selection. Some manual adjustment may be required for detail such as hair, but video tutorials on the Vertus Website (vertustech.com) make such fine-tuning easy to learn. About \$200, by download.



onOne Genuine Fractals 4.1 Interpolation—the process of adding pixels to an image so you can view or print it bigger—should be handled with care. Using Photoshop's Image Size dialog and its default bicubic resampling sometimes works fine, but quality can suffer if you try to go too big. The latest version of Genuine Fractals' popular plug-in, which is accessed through Photoshop CS, CS2, or Elements 3 and 4, is simple: Open it, input the new image size you want, check the preview, crop if you like, and hit OK. We got better results from the software than we did with the same amount of upsizing in Photoshop. And because Genuine Fractals is a plug-in, you can create a Photoshop Action to enlarge in batches. About \$160.



Bibble 4.7 Pro

Named for its creator's cat, this RAW conversion software has serious geek credentials—enhanced by the fact that it's even available for the Linux operating system, and that it was the first program to give access to Nikon's encrypted White Balance information. (Not backed by a major company, it's available only through download, at bibble-labs.com.) Frequently updated, Bibble now has just about every feature a RAW enthusiast could wish for, from super batch processing to a user-configurable interface. The latest version is integrated with Noise Ninja, a fine noise-reduction app, and Athentech's Perfectly Clear, which expands the dynamic range of an image in a single click. About \$130.

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Corel Paint Shop Pro X

It offers lots of power for its price, but Jasc's enduring image editor has always lacked the aesthetic appeal of its more expensive counterparts. This, its tenth generation and the first as a Corel product, has a newfound elegance. The Paint

Shop interface has been streamlined for easier navigation and editing, and it provides extensive context-sensitive help: When you click a tool, a sidebar on the left tells you what it does, how to use it, and what to do next. New users should appreciate the guidance, while experienced photographers can turn it off and get to work. About \$130.

IMAGING SOFTWARE

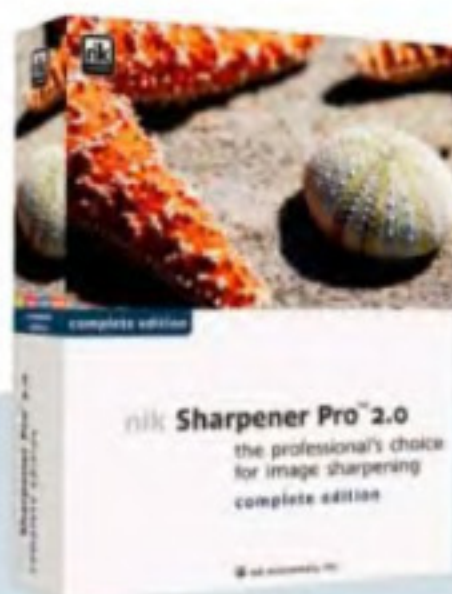


Apple Aperture 1.1

Aperture 1.0 was the first of its kind: a pro-grade photo app that seamlessly integrated Photoshop-style image adjustments with power tools for handling large image collections, both within a single, streamlined workspace. Equally revolutionary was its ability to handle RAW files from import to final output—no other software required. But the debut release had uneven output, missing functions, voracious hardware demands,

and a steep price. Aperture 1.1 is a substantial upgrade, offering much better RAW quality and significantly faster operation, particularly on Intel-based Macs. New features include a digital color meter, more RAW adjustments, better noise reduction and sharpening, and improved support for Photoshop layers. But the best thing about it may be the \$200 reduction in its original \$500 cost. (Version 1.0 adopters get a \$200 Apple Store coupon.) About \$300.

DxO Optics 3.5 This sophisticated software fixes problems endemic to digital shooting—in particular, the lens imperfections that higher sensor resolution can reveal. It addresses not just noise and other digital artifacts but also vignetting, optical distortion, and chromatic aberration. The program now comes in several editions, including Optics Pro Standard (for entry-level and “prosumer” D-SLRs) and Optics Pro Elite (for high-end D-SLRs). Once you get the version you need, you can download all the specific lens modules you want at no further charge. A Starter edition offers support for EVF cameras with noninterchangeable lenses. Useful improvements in version 3.5 include the ability to perform all fixes on RAW files and to crop an image after you do your distortion correction, better for perspective control. About \$80 (Starter), \$150 (Standard), and \$300 (Elite).



Nik Sharpener Pro 2.0

Sharpening tools in general-purpose imaging programs don't give you the power or precision of this excellent plug-in. Sharpener Pro's latest version handles 16-bit files, essential for preserving the quality of a D-SLR's RAW mode. And it allows you to selectively sharpen areas within an image using a range of tools and brushes—applying different sharpening settings to those separate areas, if you want. There's also a new filter for images converted from RAW, which require more pre-sharpening than camera-sharpened JPEGs. The software works within Photoshop, as well as compatible imaging applications from Corel, Microsoft, and Ulead. You'll probably only need the Inkjet edition, but it also comes in Complete, which for twice the price adds settings for photolab printers and halftone reproduction. About \$170.

Nikon Capture NX

Who knew that the next best software innovation would come from a camera company? Nikon has teamed up with plug-in specialist Nik (the similar names are a coincidence) to create a program that not only gives you good organizational tools but, just as important, also lets you make sophisticated, nondestructive local image adjustments—in way less time than you usually have to spend. Capture NX does this by reducing or eliminating the need for painstaking selections. Instead, you place a “control point” in an area you want to work on; a few simple sliders pop out, and you use them to adjust the range and intensity of the effect. Only pixels like the one on which you placed your point are changed. We had a mixed-light image with two different color casts, for example, and dropped a “neutral” control point in each area, using the sliders to make the needed adjustments. Capture NX then blended the results together seamlessly. All adjustments are recorded in something like a history palette, so you can go back and modify your steps without regard to their original order. And since the steps are just instructions, you don't get bloated files. Capture NX incorporates RAW conversion for Nikon shooters, of course, but users of other D-SLR brands (or Adobe DNG) will have to convert RAW files to TIFF or JPEG before they can use the software. It could well be worth the trouble. About \$150 (\$90 upgrade), available late summer.





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FINE-ART PRINTERS



HP Photosmart Pro B9180

HP's most ambitious play to date for the fine-art printer market, this eight-color, 13x19 inkjet model makes gallery-quality prints on a variety of standard and fine art papers. It's the company's very first printer to use long-lived pigment inks rather than dyes. The new inkset features five colors in addition to photo black, matte black, and light gray, the latter contributing to black-and-white output that we would describe as exceptionally smooth and neutral. B9180 prints have a tested archival life of 100 years under glass and an impressive 200 years in dark storage. Glossy prints on HP's Advanced Photo Paper are virtually waterproof (we tried to smudge them, to no avail) and very scratch-resistant. Consistent with its pro orientation, the B9180 offers automatic self-calibration via a built-in densitometer; sophisticated nozzle-cleaning to minimize clogging; and advanced color management software, including an optional high-end RIP (raster image processor). About \$700.

Epson is no longer the only 13x19-format, pigment-based kid on the block. Brash new printers from HP and Canon now challenge the refined third-generation Epson. How do they match up?

Canon Pixma Pro9500

Canon's first pigment-based 13x19-inch printer, this model adopts much of what makes Canon's dye-based models so good. One of those attributes is speed: though not as fast as its dye-based companion, the Pixma Pro9000, it's able to produce a full-resolution 11x14 print in about four minutes. And the Pro9500's resolution is phenomenal, Canon having squeezed 7,680 nozzles into its new print head. That density is aided by a small three-picoliter droplet size that smooths tonal gradation. The Pro9500 uses Canon's new Lucia inkset, which longevity maven Henry Wilhelm has shown to yield an archival life of over 100 years for color prints, considerably longer for black and white. In addition to cyan, magenta, yellow, photo cyan, photo magenta, red, and green, the new inkset incorporates photo black, matte black, and gray inks. This array allows color and black-and-white

printing on a wide range of glossy and matte surfaces without the need for wasteful cartridge swapping. The gray ink both reduces metamerism and fills in dot gaps that can produce the impression of graininess. To our eyes, the Pro9500 delivers a spot-on neutral-black image, though color "toning" can be added as desired. About \$850.



Epson Stylus Photo R2400

This model's two predecessors were for many years the only pigment-based 13x19-inch printers on the market. Now Epson faces its first competition in the category, but it's ready to rumble with the R2400. Faster than the SP 2200, the long-awaited printer uses nine UltraChrome K3 archival inks, four of which are neutral: photo black, matte black, light black, and light light black. (Yes, that's two lights in one.) Having both photo black and matte black loaded at the same time allows you to switch

from glossy to matte paper on a print-by-print basis. The new light light black ink greatly reduces metamerism, the unwanted shifting of print color—most noticeable in black-and-white prints—under different light sources. (It does this by lessening the need to mix cyan, magenta, and yellow inks to achieve tone in very light areas.) Overall, the R2400's inks produce both a fuller color gamut and visibly more tonal smoothness, along with deeper blacks, in monochrome prints. Control of monochrome quality is much simplified by Epson's new black-and-white driver, which lets you choose not just overall image tone and other print parameters, but also the specific color of shadows and highlights. About \$800.



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THE RED CARPET SPARKLED from March 1-3 at the REEL Lounge: Where Film and Fashion Meet - the ultimate Academy Awards Week destination for primping, pampering and partying.

During the day the REEL Lounge Retreat was housed at the Point De Vue Salon in Beverly Hills where celebrities and Hollywood insiders indulged in hair styling, manicures, pedicures, massage, couture styling, gifting and more! VIP guests at both venues were treated to transportation in the New 2007 Escalade. Each night the Reel Lounge hosted exclusive parties at the Aqua Restaurant and Lounge. Kicking off the evening events was a Gala Benefit in support of The Film Foundation. On Thursday night The Creative Coalition hosted the Salute to Hollywood party. Dennis Quaid's band, The Sharks, rocked the house at Friday's nominee party in honor of Josh Olson (Best Adapted Screenplay) and William Hurt (Best Supporting Actor). Celebrities in attendance included; Bai Ling, Rachel Miner, Sasha Cohen, Tara Lipinski, Bill Pullman, Billy Bush, Regina King, Ileana Douglas, Jessica Alba, Fairuza Balk, Wes Craven, and more.

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Jessica Alba with Paul Zell of Zenith Watches



Dennis Quaid with his band, The Sharks



Above: Billy Bush and Sasha Cohen
Below: Tara Lipinski



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A LIVEstyle Entertainment Production

Most of us want bigger prints, but inkjet models with 24- and 44-inch carriages force you to choose between them and your washer/dryer. These 17- and 18-inch printers are big enough.



Canon imagePROGRAF iPF5000

Until recently, if you wanted to make exhibition-quality archival inkjet prints in very large sizes, Epson was the only place to shop. But this impressive new Canon model takes direct aim at Epson's Stylus Pro 4800, producing fine art-quality prints that are 17 inches in width. The imagePROGRAF iPF5000 leads the first generation of Canon printers to use pigment-based Lucia inks, which last much longer than the dye-based inks of other Canon inkjet models (about 100 years), yet deliver a comparable color range. To that end, the iPF5000 uses a record-setting 12 separate ink cartridges, including red, blue, green, gray, and photo gray in addition to the usual CMYK, photo cyan and photo magenta, and a matte black. Unlike its competitor, the Canon lets you use glossy or matte paper on demand, switching cartridges automatically to suit your chosen surface. All that dedicated black and gray delivers lustrous monochrome results. With 30,720 ink nozzles and dual print heads, the iPF5000 can make a 16.5x23.4-inch glossy at 1200x1200 dpi in a breathless three minutes. About \$1,950.



WIDE-FORMAT PRINTERS



Epson Stylus Pro 4800 Using a new, third black ink dubbed light light black, this model makes even better prints than its predecessor, the much-praised Stylus Pro 4000. It's more or less the 17-inch version of the 13x19 Stylus Photo R2400 (see page 94), and shares that model's UltraChrome K3 inkset. The light light black reduces metamerism and improves gradation in lighter areas, and like the other eight K3 inks (CMY, photo cyan and photo magenta, plus swappable photo and matte black) features what Epson calls Micro-crystal Encapsulation. This chemical technology completely tames the uneven surface sheen that has always plagued pigment prints. The new model's improved maximum density is most apparent in glossy prints, but we saw a difference even on matte paper. With ample help from the SP4800's black-and-white driver, in fact, we made some of the richest, most consistent monochrome prints we've ever gotten from an inkjet printer. About \$1,800.

HP Designjet 90 Little brother to the 24-inch Designjet 130, one of last year's Editor's Choices, this model's 18-inch output is more than big enough for most photographers, and an inch wider than the other models featured here. Yet the printer is considerably smaller than those competitors, and much less expensive too. Though its six-ink color output is dye- rather than pigment-based, it yields prints with an under-glass display life of 70-plus years, according to Henry Wilhelm—still a lot better than a typical C-print. Not long ago, dyes were considered much superior to pigment in their ability to produce a wide color range and deep blacks, and the Designjet 90 makes you understand why. In terms of color, density, and depth, prints made on HP's Premium Plus Satin paper have a quality we associate with C-prints, only more nuanced. Detail is extremely fine at 2400dpi, but even at this top resolution the Designjet 90 prints very fast. The standard tray holds 70 sheets of 18x24 paper; there's a front bypass slot for single sheets and a rear slot for papers up to 80 pounds and .02-inch thick. (A roll feeder is optional.) About \$1,050.



THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ART IN OUR SCHOOLS.

NO WONDER PEOPLE THINK
LOUIS ARMSTRONG
WAS THE FIRST MAN TO
WALK ON THE MOON.

It's a long way from the Apollo Theatre to the Apollo program. And while his playing may have been "as lofty as a moon flight," as *Time* magazine once suggested, that would be as close as Louis Daniel Armstrong would ever get to taking "one small step for man."

But as the jazz musician of the



Instead of a giant leap, Louis Armstrong delivered one giant free-form crazy jazz groove for mankind.

20th century, giant leaps were simply a matter of course for Satchmo. For no one has ever embodied the art form the way he did. It was he who helped make virtuoso solos a part of the vocabulary. It was he who was honored with the title "American goodwill ambassador" by the State Department. It was he who was the last jazz musician to hit #1 on the Billboard pop chart.



Armstrong left his footprints on the jazz world, wearing lace-up oxfords.

Not bad for a kid whose first experience with

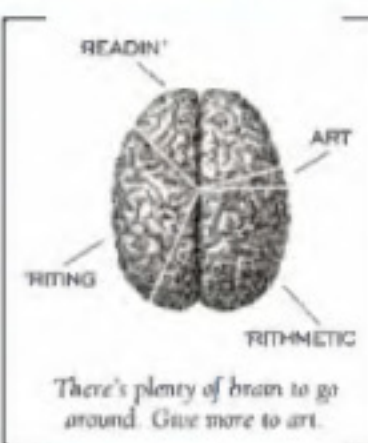
the trumpet was as a guest in a correctional home for wayward boys. If only today's schools were as enlightened and informed as that reformatory was.

Alas, the arts are dismissed as extravagant in today's schools. This, despite all the studies that show parents believe music and dance and art and drama make

their children much better students and better people.

If you feel like your kids aren't getting their fair share, make some noise. To find out how, or for more information about the benefits of arts education, please visit us on the web at

AmericansForTheArts.org. Just like the great Louis Armstrong, all you need is a little brass.



ART. ASK FOR MORE.



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Slide in a memory card, plug in your digital camera, or send images wirelessly to these compact printers and you get snapshot-sized prints without a photofinisher—or your computer.

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**BEST
BUY**



Samsung SPP-2040 We didn't have great expectations for this little dye-sub model, since Samsung is a newcomer to the snapshot printer market. But the compact, 2.4-pound SPP-2040 turned out to be the best deal of the bunch. It outputs good-looking 4x6 glossy prints at 300dpi (JPEG only) from memory cards, from a USB-connected imaging device, or by wireless Bluetooth with an optional adapter. Despite its low price it features a two-inch color LCD for selecting and adjusting images. The printer lets you cycle through photos quickly on the screen, without stalling on large files as some competitors do. While the default settings gave us prints that looked a little yellow, we rebalanced them easily with color controls that include black-and-white and sepia modes. We wish the paper were heavier and didn't leave rough edges when you remove the two tabs that permit borderless printing, and that prints cost less than 42 cents apiece. Then we remember the price. About \$100.

SNAPSHOT PRINTERS



Kodak EasyShare Photo Printer 500 This stand-alone dye-sub model makes glossy 300dpi 4x6 (and smaller) prints from JPEG files, at a low 29 cents apiece. You preview and select your images on an ample 3.5-inch color LCD. The 500 offers a range of color adjustments, black-and-white and sepia modes, and even a red-eye-correction button that works well. Light and portable, it produces good-looking prints. We found it slow to cycle through images on a card or connected device, but you can speed things up by attaching it to a computer and using the included EasyShare software to browse and prepare photos. Otherwise, in addition to printing from memory cards, it can receive photos via Bluetooth, USB-connected camera (with PictBridge support) or flash drive, or an optional Wi-Fi adapter. About \$200.



Hi-Touch S400 With the highest resolution of all the dye-sub printers in this group, the S400 makes 403dpi images on 4x6 paper, also producing sheets of photo stickers. You use the printer's tethered handset, which contains a 1.5-inch color LCD, to make numerous adjustments to color and other image parameters. You can choose a matte or glossy finish case by case, a neat trick achieved by modifying the clear laminate that the S400 applies. The relatively large 5.5-pound printer body features slots for most common memory card types, as well as a USB port for connecting PictBridge-compatible cameras and flash drives. Its protective covers do a better job than most at keeping dust from marring your prints (a problem with dye-sub printers), which cost a moderate 35 cents per 4x6. About \$150.



Canon Selphy DS810 Using a dedicated Canon ChromaLife100 cartridge, this versatile 4.2-pound ink-jet printer outputs at 4800x1200dpi from JPEGs (and some TIFFs) onto 4x6-, 4x8-, and smaller-format papers. Glossy, semigloss, and matte surfaces are available, in addition to photo stickers. Prints are somewhat warmer and a little less crisp than output from more typical dye-sub models, but are water-resistant and generally look good. The Selphy incorporates slots for most memory cards and a USB connection with PictBridge support; built-in IrDA and an optional Bluetooth adapter allow wireless printing from a variety of imaging devices, including cellphones. You choose and adjust images with a 2.5-inch color LCD. Per-print price is around 29 cents, depending on content and settings. About \$150.



Olympus P-11 Although it's large for its class, this 5.1-pound printer makes up for bulk with an attractive design and a paper tray that doesn't protrude like the ones on most compact dye-sub models. Unlike the other models here, though, it won't let you print from memory cards: You have to plug in a PictBridge-compatible camera or connect to a computer to select, adjust, and output 4x6- and 3.5x5-inch prints. But the P-11's 310dpi prints come out very nicely on its thick, glossy paper, especially when you make appropriate adjustments with the included driver software. (There's no on-printer control of image quality; default settings and PictBridge results run cool.) The P-11 offers black-and-white and sepia modes, and can handle both JPEG and TIFF files; prints cost around 39 cents apiece. About \$150.

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01 BESTWELL OPTICAL

Grain focusers, Image enlargers, Loupes

02 DXO OPTICS PRO

GET THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. DxO Optics Pro is a revolutionary software program for DSLR's and advanced digicams based on scientific algorithms customized to your camera. DxO Optics Pro automatically eliminates optical defects such as distortion, vignetting, chromatic aberrations and lens softness. **Demo free and you could win a Nikon D2X or Canon EOS 5D.**

03 DYNA-LITE, INC.

Dyna-Lite produces quality electronic flash equipment that has accurate color and output consistency for digital and conventional image capture. Dyna-Lite, being made in the U.S., has long been known for being small, lightweight, and a great value for today's demanding photographers.

04 ELITE CAMERA TRAINING VIDEOS

Offers in-depth Training Videos on Digital Cameras such as the Nikon D200, Canon 5D and Rebel XT, Sony R1, VX-2100, Pentax *ist, Minolta 7D and many others. Also videos on lighting for digital cameras and videography training.

05 TAMRAC

The Leading manufacturer of camera carrying systems offers a diverse line of camera bags, backpacks (including the new adventure series photo backpacks), sling packs, rolling cases and products specifically designed for digital cameras.

CAMERA/CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

06 CANON USA, INC.

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07 NIKON INC.

Nikon Inc. is the world leader in digital imaging, precision optics and photo imaging technology and is globally recognized for setting new standards in product design and performance for its award-winning consumer and professional photographic equipment.

08 TAMRON USA, INC.

High quality and compact zoom lenses for film and digital SLR cameras. Check out the all-in-one 18-200 mm Di-II.

COMPUTER/RELATED PRODUCTS

09 COLLAGES.NET

Over 8,500 photographers choose Collages.net as their complete posting, marketing, printing, and workflow solution for their weddings, portraits, seniors, sports, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, and corporate events. Your first two weeks are free and Collages.net Desktop software is available for free for a limited time.

10 EPSON AMERICA, INC.

Epson Stylus Pro 4800, 7800, 9800

DIGITAL PRODUCTS

11 HEWLETT PACKARD CO.

The HP family of professional, large-format photo printers delivers vibrant, lifelike quality with precise color for output ranging from proofs to portfolios to exhibition prints and more, that will resist fading for generations. All with the convenience and affordability of inkjet printing.

12 HOODMAN CORPORATION

Professional Performance Only Compact Flash.

13 QUANTUM INSTRUMENTS INC.

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14 SANDISK

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18 MPIX

The professional online lab for both the professional and the advanced amateur. Try MPIX today and see the difference a professional lab makes.

19 GREAT CIRCLE BOOKS

Publishers of fine art photography books.

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IMAGING ESSENTIALS

More and more imaging devices defy categorization, yet can be just as indispensable as the familiar tools of the photographic trade. That's why you'll find them here, along with a late-breaking camera or two and a few good bags to put it all in.



5

Dell
Ultrasharp
2407WFP

6

Pantone
huey

7

Wacom Intuos3
6x11 pen tablet

1. Nikon Coolpix S4 This six-megapixel point-and-shoot defies categorization, which is why we put it here. A pocket-sized superzoom (an oxymoron until now), it achieves its combination of small proportions and high magnification with the same split-body rotating design pioneered by Nikon in early Coolpix models. When you align the module that incorporates its 10X zoom with the main body, the camera will fit in a shirt pocket. Twist the module 90 degrees and you're ready to shoot at focal lengths from the equivalent of 38mm to 380mm, composing on the body's big 2.5-inch LCD monitor. The design is also great for shooting at high and low angles and for self-portraiture. About \$330.

2. Kodak EasyShare V610 It took great optical and electronic ingenuity to squeeze the optics into this tiny

camera, the smallest 10X superzoom in creation. The V610's zooming is accomplished with two separate lenses that don't even extend from the camera body when they change focal length. Instead, they're oriented horizontally inside the camera body—a design made possible by a sort of periscopic mirror arrangement—and do all their zooming internally. Each lens, one the equivalent in 35mm of 38-114mm and the other of 130-380mm, has its own six-megapixel image sensor. When one lens reaches the end of its range, the camera automatically switches to the other. Optics aside, the V610 features one of the biggest (2.8-inch) and sharpest (230,000 pixel) LCD screens you'll find, plus the latest high-speed Bluetooth 2.0 EDR wireless connection, which can zap images to cell phones, PDAs, printers, and photo kiosks. About \$500.

3. Logitech NuLOOQ Professional Series When you're working at the computer, your right hand holds your mouse or the pen to your Wacom tablet. What does your left hand hold? Coffee, maybe. And while the benefits of coffee in speeding up workflow are debatable, those of Logitech's NuLOOQ Navigator are not. Operated with your nonmouse hand, and about the size of half a tennis ball, this all-new desktop device may be the best thing since the scroll wheel. It doesn't move like a mouse, gripping your desk firmly by its stainless-steel base as you rotate its rubber ring and tap or slide your finger on its touchpad. These controls allow you to quickly access tools and make adjustments in Photoshop and other new Adobe apps, including Illustrator CS2 and InDesign CS2 (Mac only). The Navigator is specifically designed to work with the

supplied NuLOOQ Tool dial plug-in: The software's interface is essentially a small dial-like display that floats above the cursor, wherever it happens to be on the screen. The dial contains up to eight pie-like wedges, all user-selectable, that you click to access frequently-used tools, sparing you having to move the cursor all over a big screen. You can even zoom in and out with the Navigator's ring—no need to use menus or keyboard shortcuts. But if you prefer to let your right hand do all the work, and hang on to your coffee, you can get the Tool dial software alone and use your mouse or pen to run it. About \$150.

4. ColorVision Spyder2PRO Combining an all-new colorimeter with next-generation software, this state-of-the-art monitor calibration package hits the silver screen—literally, since



8
Epson
Perfection
V700
Photo



9
Media Street
eMotion
Digital Media
Player

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the Spyder2PRO system is the first one capable of color-tuning any digital LCD projector. To do so, you connect the projector to both your computer and the Spyder2 calibration device, facing the latter toward the projection screen. The system works equally well with CRT and flat-panel monitors, laptops included. The new version is reportedly five times more sensitive than its predecessor, producing cleaner grays, smoother gradation, and more faithful flesh tones. About \$260.

5. Dell Ultrasharp 2407WFP

With its huge 24-inch diagonal screen, ample 1900x1200 pixel resolution, and built-in nine-format memory card reader, this stunning flat-panel LCD monitor is perfect for high-res image editing. Its fast 6ms response time and very wide viewing angle also make gaming and movies a pleasure too, not that we're easily distracted

from our Photoshop. The new Ultrasharp has five different video connectors, and is compatible with the new HD DVD and Blu-ray high-def disks.

6. Pantone huey Smaller than a Sharpie marker, this novice-friendly colorimeter calibrates your monitor without ever mentioning gamma, white point, or ICC profile. It connects to the computer via USB, and as it rests against the screen measures patterns emitted by goof-proof software, creating distinct settings for activities such as photo editing, graphic design, and gaming. Yes, you can do that with more expensive calibration systems, but the huey is the only one we know that factors in the environment: When sitting in its desktop cradle it measures changing room light and continuously adjusts your monitor to keep it consistent from one hour to the next, window light to lamplight. About \$80.

7. Wacom Intuos3 6x11 pen tablet

Wide-format computer monitors such as Dell's Ultrasharp 2407WFP (opposite) have become increasingly affordable, and popular with photographers. Their screen shape accommodates the more rectangular image of digital SLRs, and/or leaves room on the sides for tool palettes. Wacom's latest professional pen tablet departs from the line's usual 3:4 aspect ratio, offering proportions even more wide-screen than the new monitors. At 6x11 inches, its pressure-sensitive area is much wider than in the popular 6x8-inch size. But like the latter, the new tablet offers 5,080 lines per inch of resolution—plus Express Keys and a Touch Strip that can be operated with the hand that isn't holding the pen. These new features can be programmed to perform frequently-used keystrokes and mouseclicks, reduc-

ing awkward back-and-forth between tablet and keyboard. About \$360.

8. Epson Perfection V700 Photo

Eye-popping optical resolution of 6400dpi, a high maximum density of 4.0, and true 48-bit output allow this versatile letter-format flatbed scanner to deliver top-notch results at a reasonable price. With these specs, even 35mm looks good when scanned with the built-in transparency hood, which can cover film formats up to a full 8x10. There are also holders for 35mm slides (12 at a time), 35mm strips (24 frames), medium format, and 4x5. Two different lenses shift into place depending on scan resolution, and Digital ICE automatically corrects image defects. About \$530.

9. Media Street eMotion Digital Media Player

Digital picture frames are a dime a dozen, or will be soon.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

TECH
AND
VISION

BRAND NEW BAGS

Designing photographers

Photo authority Joe Farace has brainstormed with bag-savvy Adorama to create the **Adorama Joe Farace Reporter Backpack** (\$75), a nimble design for digital photographers who tote a laptop. The 16x13x10-inch bag has nine customizable compartments, and its back slot accommodates laptops with screens up to 17 inches. It's half of the first husband-and-wife camera bag design project, the other being the **Adorama Mary Farace Daypack Backpack** (\$55), a 14x12x6 inch model for nature outings. Visit adorama.com.

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NEW HEIGHTS

Steps to better photographs

Elevation is one of the most underrated photographic devices, adding drama to a picture and visually separating elements of a scene that might otherwise overlap confusingly in the final photo's two dimensions. But unless you have well-placed stairs or a nearby car hood to scramble up, a higher point of view is hard to get.

Enter the Adorama Photographer's LadderKart (about \$60, at adorama.com). This ingenious combination of hand truck and folding stepladder lets you schlep up to 250 pounds of photo gear to a location with ease, thanks in part to four-inch rubber wheels. Once you've unpacked your stuff, the LadderKart opens up into a stepladder, letting you take pleasing above-the-crowd shots. The top step is 30 inches high, yet the foam-covered handle doubles as an ample 15-inch safety rail.

We put the LadderKart through its paces and found it extremely solid—a sturdier stepladder, in fact, than anything we have at home.



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The LadderKart's aluminum frame and polypropylene steps support up to 300 pounds. (Defensive line-backers need not apply.) Yet it folds down to a six-inch thickness, allowing you to stow it easily.

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11

Unibind
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12

Lensbaby
Macro Kit

This model is way more versatile than that. Its seven-inch, 16:9-format screen displays digital images and video from just about any source. A card slot takes SD, MMC, and Memory Stick; a pop-out door on the back accepts CDs and DVDs of all descriptions; and USB 2.0 and video/audio in ports handle the rest, whether card readers, hard drives, or digital cameras. In addition to JPEGs, the eMotion plays DivX and MPEG video, and, yes, even MP3 and WMA music files. It stands up on a desk in either portrait or landscape mode, though you can rotate images with a button push; menu and control buttons run along the top and side. It comes with a small selection of interchangeable face plates, but you can get more to match your decor. A Li-ion battery lets you take along the two-pound player when you can't plug in, providing about 2½ hours of operation—enough to show someone your portfolio or watch a movie. About \$300.

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Like the original Turbo Battery, the 2x2 and Compact provide ultra-fast recycling and camera power for the longest, most intensive shoots. All Turbos display remaining capacity on their "fuel gauges" so that you won't be caught unaware.

All Turbos use the latest nickel-metal-hydride or lead cells to give consistent, excellent performance (Nicaid "memory" cells are not used).

Get the power you need. For the past 25 years photographers have relied on Quantum technology for power, flash, and wireless control.



10. Tamrac Adventure 7 This two-part backpack recognizes that there's more to life than photography. Its top compartment holds clothes, lunch, and other necessities of shooting on the road or trail. Its padded lower half unzips for access to a complete camera system—your D-SLR with several lenses, a strobe, and accessories, configured with adjustable inserts and protected by a weather flap. A large front pocket and two mesh side pockets hold items for quick access; a waist belt and chest strap stabilize the pack. About \$60.

11. Unibind PhotoBook Creator You can design and order bound photo albums online, but it takes time and the cost adds up. And you can never be sure that what you get is what you expected. This easy system lets you make books to your specifications offline; you just have to make the pages on your own printer. Once you've done that, you assemble up to 220 prints or laid-out pages (the system comes with simplified page layout software) within a steel-spined Unibind PhotoBook album. (Numerous sizes, styles, and colors can be ordered at unibindphotobook.com.) Place your book spine-down into the Unibind electric binder, press a button, and it heats the metal and adhesive to bind the album—in three seconds. You can repeat the process to dismantle a book for additions or editing, then rebind it. About \$100 (including two covers).

12. Lensbaby Macro Kit From fashion to fine art, many photographers have adopted tilts and swings to soften areas of the subject in a more selective way than allowed by depth of field control alone. But these off-axis rotations of the film or lens plane must ordinarily be done with a view camera's movements or, in smaller cameras, with expensive special-purpose lenses and/or attachments. The Lensbaby lets D-SLR and 35mm photographers create similar effects with much less trouble and expense, incorporating a barrel made of flexible tubing, essentially a cylindrical bellows, that fits directly on your camera (most popular mounts are available) and features a metal collar at the outer end. (Manually interchangeable aperture disks provide broad exposure control and allow you to adjust



depth of field to go along with the effect.) To focus the lens—and vary the position of the “sweet spot” of sharpest detail, while introducing softness to other areas—the photographer simply places fingers on the collar and pulls and/or bends the entire barrel. You can push the collar out to focus closer, but the Lensbaby by itself can’t focus on anything closer than about 16 inches. Its macro lens set lets you take the soft-and-sharp effect into the close-up realm, where inherently shallow depth of field makes it even more dramatic. It includes supplementary +4 and +10 close-up attachments that allow you to focus at distances from two to 13 inches. About \$30.

13. Casio Exilim EX-Z1000 The very latest 10-megapixel camera isn't a big, pricey rival to Nikon's D-200 D-SLR or Sony's Cyber-shot DSC-R1 EVF. It's this tiny, affordable point-and-shoot, the latest from Casio. Though it's just 3.6x2.3x0.9 inches and weighs only five ounces, the Z1000 has a super-bright 2.8-inch LCD that nearly fills the camera back; a 38-114mm (equivalent) zoom; built-in image stabilization; speeds up to ISO 3200; nine-point AF; a 3fps Rapid Flash function; VGA-quality movie capability; and, as you might expect from Casio, 37 scene modes. Open up its JPEGs in Photoshop and you get 30MB files from a pocket point-and-shoot. About \$400.

14. LowePro SlingShot AW 200 Photo-journalists who can't afford to miss a shot often shun backpacks because it takes too much time to get to the gear inside. This ingenious LowePro model lets you have it both ways. You carry it on your back with a comfortable sling-style strap, but when you need to get inside you simply swing it around to the front, which turns the bag sideways. The zippered lid to its main compartment now faces up and flips out, letting you access its contents as if you were using a shoulder bag. The compartment is big enough to hold a D-SLR with midsize zoom, three to four lenses, and accessories. There's also a memory card pouch, organizer pockets, and a separate all-weather cover. About \$80.

15. National Geographic Expedition Carbon Tripod NGET2 Field-tested by *National Geographic* photographers, this rugged professional tripod is the lightweight top of a new line of tripods and other gear, including camera bags and backpacks, from the gold standard of editorial photography. Produced by Manfrotto, it has three-section faceted legs with contoured lever locks; the legs can be angled at 25, 43, 73, and 90 degrees for low-level shooting, helped out by a center column that you can mount horizontally. All-weather leg wraps keep your hands from freezing to the tripod. Thanks to its carbon fiber and magnesium construction the Expedition weighs just 7.5 pounds, yet can support a camera and lens combination of over 17 pounds; it has a maximum height of 63 inches without head. As for that, consider the Expedition Hydrostatic Head RC5, a quick-release, fluid-damped ballhead with an integral bellows-like sleeve that insulates the works from dust and dirt. About \$375 (tripod only).



15

National Geographic Expedition Carbon Tripod NGET2

13

Casio Exilim EX-Z1000



14

LowePro SlingShot AW 200



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Adventure 7
model 5547

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WHAT'S THE NEXT BIG THING?

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Where to next, on the long road that's led us from the camera obscura to the full-frame sensor D-SLR and the camera cellphone? Bear in mind two key facts. First, the number of image-capture devices in use is exploding. (By the end of the decade, the quantity of such devices available will have increased by a factor of 10.) Second, that trend is already driving unprecedented levels of investment in imaging research and development. As a result, in the coming years we'll see image capture devices go through their most profound evolution since the invention of light-sensitive materials. This reinvention will center around two key concepts: The Synthetic Eye and Connected Imaging. The good news is that these changes will make such devices much more valuable to all of us, whether we make a living behind our cameras or use them to record the moments of our lives.

The Synthetic Eye

Recently a 20-something asked me why his new digital camera produced blurred images in low light. I looked at his pictures and pointed out that they were superior to what he would have obtained with a film camera. Then the irrelevancy of my statement dawned on me: This young man wasn't comparing his digital camera to film—he had probably never even used film. He was grading his experience against the standard that made sense to him, the only standard that makes sense for customers today: the eye.

The eye, the human visual system, is the performance benchmark that digital camera designers will have in their sights for the immediate future. Technologies are already appearing that promise to exceed it, but there's a lot of work still to be done just to equal it. The most recent trade show of the Photo Marketing Association featured a flurry of product announcements aimed squarely at my young friend's complaint: cameras with high-ISO, anti-shake, blur-correction, and noise-reduction technologies. But even our best cameras do not have a human's ability to see fine detail (so don't expect the resolution race to end anytime soon) or to hold information at both ends of high-contrast scenes. These cameras don't equal even our limited ability to see in color in low light. They also fail to match human vision in less immediately obvious ways: Cameras don't have peripheral vision; they don't perceive and record depth and dimension information; they treat "still" and "motion" as different modes. And they don't record anywhere near as much "metadata" as we associate with our own visual memories.

Rising to the level of these capabilities is a huge challenge for engineers and product designers. But ultimately we expect nothing less from our cameras than the ability to equal what we see with our eyes. We won't be satisfied until we get it, and we'll vote with our wallets in favor of the products that give it to us.

Connected Imaging

Pure image-capture capabilities, however, are only the beginning of what imaging companies hope we'll open our wallets for. Our technological society is built upon an infrastructure of computing devices, the Internet, and television—and the way we take and use pictures is highly influenced by, and dependent on, all of these forces. The future belongs to products and services that help people connect with each other more effectively. They in turn will be designed to enhance the emerging world of "Connected Imaging."

From the industry's viewpoint, the rise of Connected Imaging is an opportunity to develop products that "think ahead," that improve not just the capture experience itself but the downstream uses of images as well. To succeed, camera makers will have to address system constraints that dictate the form of future photo technology.

For instance, will a picture be displayed on a 60-inch high-definition TV or on a cellphone? If the latter, it would be wise for an image-capture product to create a low-resolution version that will transmit efficiently. It might also be advisable to zoom

and crop so that the key elements are clearly visible on a small screen. Or perhaps the capture device should produce a dynamic file that automatically pans and zooms across the image to highlight specific features.

Customer intent will also be a decisive factor in product design. What is the user trying to communicate through his or her images? Will that be best served by a single frame or by a short motion sequence? How can composition, focus, and lighting be optimized for that? These skills and techniques are currently the domain of professional photographers, but in the future every photographer will have access to them. (Remember that until the advent of built-in light metering, achieving consistent exposure was beyond the abilities of the average user.) Expect coming generations of capture devices, particularly those aimed at mass-market consumers, to incorporate intelligent "assistants" that will collect and analyze information about the user's intent and system constraints, and help them capture images accordingly.

The place of images in our society is changing profoundly. All but gone are the days when most people took pictures only twice a year, at Christmas and on vacation. More than ever before, we will use our images—both still and moving—to communicate more effectively in all aspects of our daily lives.

*Alexis Gerard is coauthor of *Going Visual* (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), president of Future Image Inc. (futureimage.com), and chair of 6Sight and Mobile Imaging Summit executive conferences.*

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ONE THOUSAND WORDS...



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They are the moments that have impacted our lives... the indelible images that become etched into society's collective mind. In the relatively short time that man has used the power of photography to educate, inspire, document and shape modern culture, Nikon cameras have captured some of the most powerful and poignant moments ever witnessed. Evoking emotion and provoking thought, long after first view – a powerful photograph can render a poet's adjectives pallid; here then is such an image, "a picture is worth a thousand words..."

With eighty percent of the city below sea level, New Orleans was no match for Hurricane Katrina; possibly the largest hurricane to hit the United States in recorded history, and indisputably the costliest and deadliest. Five months after the levees were breached, and water from Lake Pontchartrain inundated the city with water, *National Geographic* photographer Annie Griffiths Belt visited the ravaged

area through the aid organization she works with each spring, Church World Service.

"When you talk to people who have lost their homes to fires or floods or hurricanes or earthquakes . . . often what they grab or what they're sad they didn't grab are their pictures," Belt says. Five months after the storm, these decaying photo albums were still in a pile on the

ANNIE GRIFFITHS BELT



© Mark Thiessen

floor of a woman's garage, whom Belt photographed in January.

"This particular picture was taken at the home of a woman who lived very near the levee. She was home alone with her dog when the levee broke. All of a sudden, the water started coming—she was asleep [on the first floor] and she woke up because she heard a funny sound, and when she stepped out of bed, she stepped into water.

"Then it started rising very quickly and she took her dog up to the second story. She left the dog upstairs and she climbed out onto the roof, because [the water] was coming up so fast . . . and while she was up there, she saw a house across the street from her explode. The gas lines had ruptured and it exploded and it was on fire. It really scared her, but she couldn't get the dog out the window to the roof, and she wasn't going to leave her dog, so she took the dog by the collar and she swam down to the first floor and got out a door with the dog. And then she and the dog swam from tree to tree for two miles to get out of there . . . to dry land and to the home of a woman she knew."

While the impact of the water's immediate force took many lives and destroyed a considerable amount of property, the aftermath of the flood was truly devastating. Many people, including the young woman whose albums are shown here, assumed that evacuation was unnecessary. "I don't think many people that I met in New Orleans really understood what would happen if the levees broke," Belt says. "[This went] way beyond a hurricane. Hurricane water comes, it's horrific, but it goes. This was a disaster on a completely different scale because the city sat and marinated in about . . . twelve feet of water, for three weeks. And the destruction that [it] caused is really mind-boggling. Building materials can't hold up under that. And then it was followed by intense heat and mold. And that pretty much gobbled up the city."

"When I went to photograph [this woman]—I did a portrait of her and her dog—out in the garage with this pile of old photo albums and it was just so poignant. And she said what so many people seem to say, that the thing that was most heartbreaking of all was to lose their pictures...Even if you lose everything you have, your pictures are your memories and they're almost a record of who you have loved and what you've experienced and where you've been.

"There's a real emotional journey you take when you go through photo albums. . . . You remember the smells and the laughter and the sadness and the humor and all of that. And when you don't have those pictures, it's almost like it didn't happen. It's harder to remember it all. It's not just the visuals, it's what the visuals trigger in your mind and in your heart about the journey your life has taken."

As a photographer, Belt feels the most important part of her job is to humanize a situation. "I try to put a human face on the big story . . . a lot of times, Americans . . . are so overwhelmed with the big

story, they get a little desensitized and sometimes, just a single story or a single moment in a person's life cuts through all of that and helps people to understand what it feels like to be them. That's the goal of my work.

"I think we can all relate to [this photo]. It's love; it's a family doing happy, normal things that we all have done ourselves. There's a resonance there . . . a common understanding of what those pictures must have meant to that family, because we've all got those pictures in our photo album, and we know what they mean to us."

Belt took this photograph using a Nikon D200, with an 18–200mm VR lens at 1/15th sec and wide open. She has been a Nikon shooter for thirty years; a love affair that started with the Nikon F she shot with as a newspaper photographer and has continued through to the D200 she just started using. "I love the D200," she says. "It's like the D70 on steroids." She also appreciates the small size and light weight. "I like to work very discreetly," she says, "so I like a small camera. I would rather look like somebody's mother than a photographer."

It may be her empathy and mothering instincts that make Annie Griffiths Belt such an outstanding photographer. "Seeing photographs like these... you just get a tightness in your chest. You feel their loss. That's what I'm looking for when I walk into situations. I didn't go there to photograph anybody's photo albums, I went there to try and communicate what it must feel like to be them. And seeing those precious photo albums horribly damaged, piled on the floor of a garage touched me. And so I tried to make a picture that would touch others."

Annie Griffiths Belt, Nikon and *American PHOTO* will be extending support to Habitat for Humanity's Operation Home Delivery, an effort to rebuild the Gulf Coast region devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. To find out how you can help, please visit www.habitat.org/disaster/2005/katrina.



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